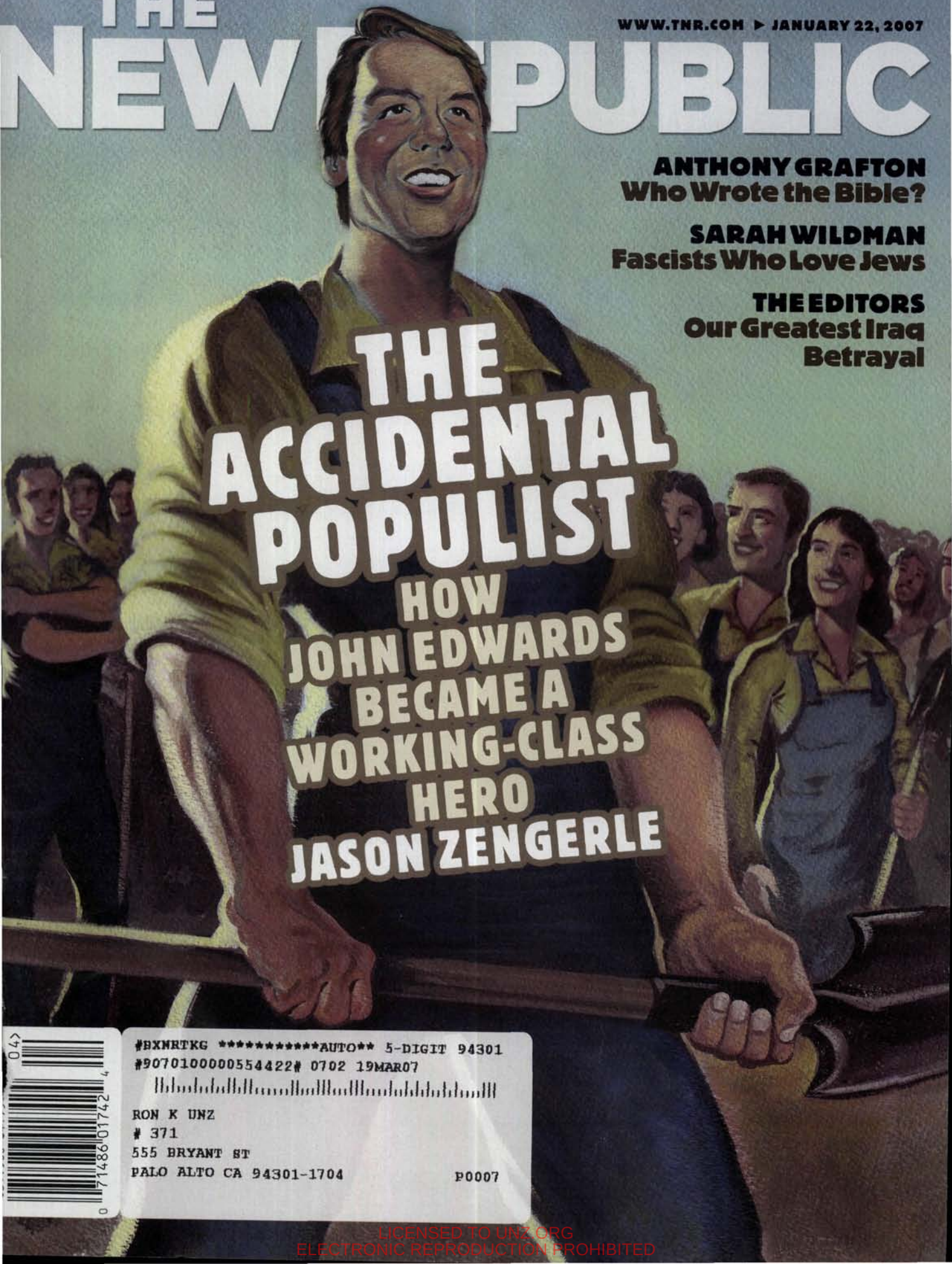
THE NEW REPUBLIC

WWW.TNR.COM ▶ JANUARY 22, 2007



ANTHONY GRAFTON
Who Wrote the Bible?

SARAH WILDMAN
Fascists Who Love Jews

THE EDITORS
Our Greatest Iraq Betrayal

THE ACCIDENTAL POPULIST

HOW JOHN EDWARDS BECAME A WORKING-CLASS HERO

JASON ZENGERLE

#BXNRTKG **********AUTO** 5-DIGIT 94301
#907010000554422# 0702 19MAR07

RON K UNZ
371
555 BRYANT ST
PALO ALTO CA 94301-1704 P0007

04>
0 71486 01742 4

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ADAM'S FALLACY

A GUIDE TO ECONOMIC THEOLOGY

DUNCAN K. FOLEY

"Duncan Foley could not fail to have written a book with spark and depth. He has done that, and it ranks right up there with Heilbroner's classic [*The Worldly Philosophers*]. Heilbroner has more to say about the political and economic setting in which each of his world philosophers emerged; but Foley gets deeper into the analytical content of major schools of thought."

—Robert Solow,
NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

Belknap Press / new in cloth

FIRST LADY OF THE CONFEDERACY

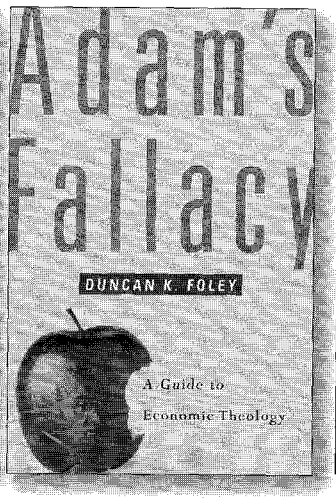
VARINA DAVIS'S CIVIL WAR

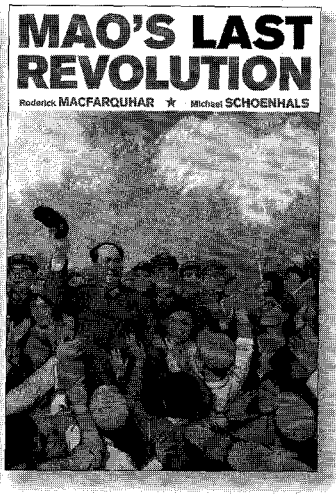
JOAN E. CASHIN

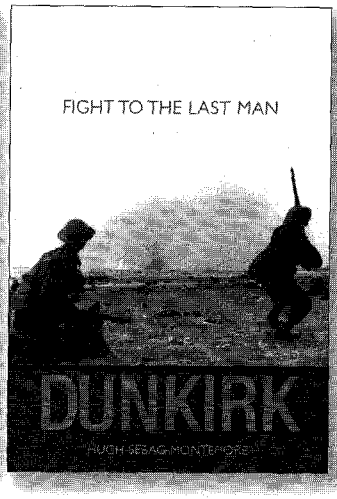
"Joan Cashin has dedicated years of research and writing to produce what will surely become the definitive work on this remarkable and misunderstood woman. Meticulous research in contemporary newspapers, government documents and correspondence places Varina Davis within the political and social framework of her world."

—Mary Hatcher,
CHARLESTON POST AND COURIER

Belknap Press / new in cloth







MAO'S LAST REVOLUTION

RODERICK MacFARQUHAR AND MICHAEL SCHOENHALS

"It has been enthralling to read Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals's exhaustively researched new book on China's Cultural Revolution—a sensation akin to returning to a Chinese painting in which a mist-shrouded landscape has miraculously cleared to reveal what was obscured beyond... MacFarquhar and Schoenhals have provided the most definitive roadmap to date of China's odyssey through those tumultuous times."

—Orville Schell, WASHINGTON POST

Belknap Press / new in cloth

DUNKIRK

FIGHT TO THE LAST MAN

HUGH SEBAG-MONTEFIORE

"Few readers could fail to be gripped by Dunkirk's combination of enthralling narrative and firsthand testimony. Indeed, the greatest strength of this book—greater even than its excellent maps and detail-rich notes—is the extent to which the author allows the diaries, letters, and memoirs of contemporaries to speak for themselves."

—Niall Ferguson,
NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

new in cloth

WWW.HUP.HARVARD.EDU HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
MARTIN PERETZ

EDITOR Franklin Foer
LITERARY EDITOR Leon Wieseltier
EXECUTIVE EDITOR J. Peter Scoblic
MANAGING EDITOR Katherine Marsh
DEPUTY EDITOR Richard Just
MANAGING EDITOR/ONLINE
Adam B. Kushner
EDITOR-AT-LARGE Peter Beinart
SENIOR EDITORS
Jonathan Chait, Jonathan Cohn, Michelle Cottle, Michael Crowley, Ruth Franklin, John B. Judis, Lawrence F. Kaplan, Ryan Lizza, Christopher Orr, Noam Scheiber, Lee Siegel, Andrew Sullivan, James Wood, Jason Zengerle
LEGAL AFFAIRS Jeffrey Rosen
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR
Britt Peterson
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR/ONLINE
Alexander M. Belenky
SPECIAL PROJECTS/ONLINE
Sacha Zimmerman
CULTURE EDITOR/ONLINE
Christiane Culhane
FILMS Stanley Kauffmann
THEATER Robert Brustein
ART Jed Perl
ARCHITECTURE Sarah Williams Goldhagen
MUSIC David Hajdu
DANCE Jennifer Homans
POETRY EDITOR Glyn Maxwell
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS
Thomas B. Edsall, Joshua Kurlantzick
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
David A. Bell, Paul Berman, Gregg Easterbrook, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Nathan Glazer, Anthony Grafton, David Grann, David Greenberg, Yossi Klein Halevi, Robert Kagan, Michael Kinsley, Charles Krauthammer, Jeremy McCarter, John McWhorter, Sherwin B. Nuland, Michael B. Oren, David Rieff, Maggie Scarf, Ronald Steel, Cass R. Sunstein, Alan Taylor, E.V. Thaw, Helen Vendler, Michael Walzer, Sean Wilentz, Alan Wolfe, Robert Wright
CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS
Jack Coughlin, David Cowles, Vint Lawrence, David Schorr
ART/DESIGN DIRECTION
Joe Heroun, Christine Car/H2C Media
EDITORIAL-CORPORATE COORDINATOR
Linda Gerth
PRODUCTION AND I.T. DIRECTOR
Bruce Steinke
PRODUCTION MANAGER
Henry Riggs
PRODUCER/ONLINE
Tim Dugan
ASSISTANT EDITORS
Kara Baskin, Eve Fairbanks, Keelin McDonell
ASSISTANT LITERARY EDITOR
Chloë Schama
ASSISTANT POETRY EDITOR Melanie Rehak
REPORTER-RESEARCHERS
Isaac Chotiner, Bradford Plumer, Elspeth Reeve
ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
James Kirchick
ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR-AT-LARGE
Conor Clarke

GENERAL MANAGER Allen Chin
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR Lori Fleishman Dorr
ONLINE MARKETING MANAGER Emilie Harkin

ADVERTISING SALES & MARKETING
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Richard Parker
DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING, WEST
Joan Stapleton Tooley
ACCOUNT DIRECTOR Julie Sturmak Kettell
PUBLISHING REPRESENTATIVE
Perry Janoski, Allston-Cherry, Ltd.
MARKETING MANAGER Alexandra Scott

TNR/ON SYMPOSIA ON PUBLIC POLICY
Joan Daly

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION
ACCOUNTING MANAGER Jessie Ahn
BUSINESS ASSISTANT Jillian Wheat

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
LEONARD ASPER
LAURENCE GRAFSTEIN
ROGER HERTOG, Chairman
MARTIN PERETZ
MICHAEL STEINHARDT

THE NEW REPUBLIC
Updated daily. On the Web at www.tnr.com.

THE NEW REPUBLIC
A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

JANUARY 22, 2007 WASHINGTON, D.C. ISSUE 4,801 VOLUME 236

COVER STORY

Jason Zengerle **13** **The Accidental Populist** Why did John Edwards, the multi-millionaire presidential candidate with Hollywood good looks, turn himself into a tribune for the working class?

POLITICS & THE WORLD

4 **CORRESPONDENCE** Resolving the Iraq war with reason alone, bring on the civil war, Baker's boo-boos, &c.

Peter Beinart **6** **TRB | Binge and Surge**
George W. Bush screws John McCain one last time.

The Editors **7** **Left Behind** The coming hell for America's Iraqi friends.

Michael Crowley **8** **Pay it Forward** Democrats know they should be merciful, but revenge is so much fun.

Nathan Glazer **9** **Exceptionalist** Seymour Martin Lipset, RIP.

Sarah Wildman **11** **Dewinter's Tale** How the European far right stopped worrying and learned to love the Jews.

Joseph Braude **34** **NEW YORK DIARIST | Survivor: Baghdad**

BOOKS & THE ARTS

Stanley Kauffmann **20** **FILMS | Years Past** *The Good German*'s faux film noir disappoints; an anti-ten-best list.

Anthony Grafton **21** **Getting the Word Out** *In the Beginning: Bibles Before the Year 1000*, edited by Michelle P. Brown

Christopher Benfey **24** **Dark Darker Darkest** *The Notebooks of Robert Frost*, edited by Robert Faggen

Simon Blackburn **29** **No Easy Answers**
The intellectual achievement of Bernard Williams.

Mike White **32** **POEM** | *Whale*

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY *David Brinley*

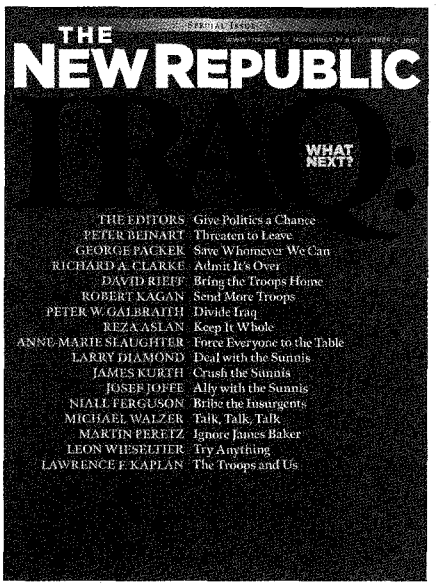
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

PURELY ACADEMIC

READING THE IRAQ ISSUE PROVIDED a sense of what is going on there ("Iraq: What Next?" November 2). It also provided a sense of the notions held by a few upper-middle-class people who earn their living thinking and writing in comfortable neighborhoods in Washington, D.C.; Princeton; Cambridge; Palo Alto; and other non-war zones in the United States where water, food, rule of law, and utilities are taken for granted. What one wonders after reading the issue is, of the 16 views published, why the editors chose not to publish any perspectives by a) Iraqis—Sunni, Shia, or Kurd; b) American military personnel who served in Iraq; or c) anybody who lives and works in the neighboring countries. Wouldn't Iraqis and American military personnel be in a position to test the viability of the ideas expressed in THE NEW REPUBLIC by writers who have negligible direct experience with the realities of this war? What your magazine does is publish articles by people with fine academic credentials who believe in the superiority of their thoughts and who do not realize how limited they are by the combination of their privileged experiences, their inadequate knowledge of the region and circumstances, and the influence of the safe cities in which they reside. The ability of author after author to reference the terminology of the region is impressive. Yet this capability amounts to a faux authority—kind of like someone who can weave into his language references to musical terms but cannot play a melody. By publishing this issue, the editors conveyed the message that the only important views are those of people who are like the editors in professional background, temperament, and geographical comfort. Next time, dare to try the unconventional tack of asking Iraqis, American military personnel, and other affected people what they think should be done. Moreover, it is striking that, in all the essays published, no author wrote a single sentence exploring why none of the recommendations expressed have been put into action. What is the point of holding a dinner party in which you serve dishes to which the guests are allergic? Finally, it is interesting to see the editors apologize for their espousal of the war, because this apology gives rise to the question: If reason alone (in contrast to reason coupled with the experience of people who are confronting the realities directly) led the editors to a wrong conclusion, what basis is there to believe that, this time around, reason alone—from people far removed from the realities of the war—will lead to the right conclusion?

SANDEEP PURI
New York, New York


THE NEW REPUBLIC
WHAT NEXT?
THE EDITORS Give Politics a Chance
PETER BEINART Threaten to Leave
GEORGE PACKER Save Whomever We Can
RICHARD A. CLARKE Admit It's Over
DAVID RIEFF Bring the Troops Home
ROBERT KAGAN Send More Troops
PETER W. GALBRAITH Divide Iraq
REZA ASLAN Keep It Whole
ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER Force Everyone to the Table
LARRY DIAMOND Deal with the Sunnis
JAMES KURTH Crush the Sunnis
JOSEF JOFFE Ally with the Sunnis
NIALL FERGUSON Bribe the Insurgents
MICHAEL WALZER Talk, Talk, Talk
MARTIN PERETZ Ignore James Baker
LEON WIESELTIER Try Anything
LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN The Troops and Us

SHIITE HAPPENS

ONLY JAMES KURTH OFFERS A WAY to withdraw from Iraq and win the war at the same time ("Crush the Sunnis," November 27). In fact, it is the only way we can make the lives lost and the money spent worthwhile. We have given the Iraqis more than enough chances to rise up as a strong, independent country with some semblance of democracy, but the Sunnis have sabotaged it from the very beginning. So let the civil war begin. But let's make sure that we arm the Shia so heavily that they not only win, but win quickly and do so without any help from Iran. We will also have to let the Shia use whatever methods they choose to interrogate captives and intimidate the civilians who hide insurgents. This strategy is proactive rather than passively reactive. We will be leaving Iraq better than we found it, and, when we leave, we will have a good relationship with two out of the three factions. In fact, the Shia state will depend on help from us to fend off its enemies.

MARK T. MOBERG
St. Cloud, Minnesota

HALF-BAKED

MARTIN PERETZ GAVE US GOOD cause to ignore James Baker based on the support he gave Saddam Hussein's regime after its 1991 military defeat ("Ignore James Baker," November 27). Baker's reflexive preservation of the old regime was part of a broad pattern that placed the United States on the wrong side of history in two other foreign policy theaters. Faced with the breakup of Yugoslavia by indigenous democratic forces representing long-standing national aspirations, Baker and fellow commissioner Lawrence Eagleburger signaled that our government would not support separatism unless Yugoslavia consented. The Serbs took that as a green light to use force that soon morphed into genocidal catastrophe. Baker's rationale was that accepting the breakup of Yugoslavia would hasten the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which he feared above all. Baker saw himself as the conscience of a status-quo power—so much so that he sportingly struggled in vain to save the adversary when the cold war was won. His talents and temperament were better suited to the Florida election aftermath that has been his lasting triumph. There, he achieved the success that eluded him in Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and the first Iraq war.

EVERETT D. EMERSON
Rancho Palos Verdes, California

THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 236, Number 4, Issue 4,501, January 22, 2007 (Printed in the United States on January 11, 2007) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated January 1 thru 15, February 19 & 26, April 9 & 16, June 4 & 11, July 9 & 16, August 13 & 20, September 10 & 17, November 26 & December 3, and December 31, 2007 thru January 14, 2008) at 1331 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. For advertising inquiries, please contact Jillian Wheat at (202) 508-4444. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97, foreign, $119.97 (U.S. funds); Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $8.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling). © 2007 by The New Republic, LLC. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 628-9383. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: letters@tnr.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call (800) 827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Unrelenting and Virulent Hatred of the Arabs

Will peace ever be possible under those conditions?

After almost sixty years of statehood, Israel is a lone outpost of Western civilization and its values. It is the staunchest ally of the United States in that part of the world – a bulwark of democracy. The Arab nations surrounding it are a swamp of terrorism, corruption, dictatorship, and human enslavement. But the hatred of the Arabs against Israel and against all Jews is so abiding and so virulent that peace, at least for the foreseeable future, seems unattainable and most unlikely.

What are the facts?

No "sacrifice" will overcome the hatred There are those who still believe that the never-ending conflict between the Arabs and the Jews could be settled if the Israelis were willing to bring greater "sacrifices for peace." Such "sacrifices" would include relinquishing ever-larger portions of their tiny country (less than half the size of San Bernardino County in California) to the Palestinians, dismantling the "settlements" in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), handing the Golan Heights to Syria , and allowing the "return of the refugees," a group that has grown miraculously from about 500,000 to somewhere around 5 million – and the absorption of even a substantial fraction of which would signify the demographic end of the Jewish states.

> "Israel's only course...is to assume its previous stance of unflinching deterrence...and not to be inhibited...to preempt resolutely if it appears necessary to assure survival of the country."

After the bloody intifada, Israel, ill-advisedly, vacated Gaza. It was rewarded with killing and kidnapping of its soldiers and by daily barrages of Qassam rockets. In the north, after Israel had abandoned its southern Lebanon buffer zone, Hizbollah (the "Army of God") launched the second "Lebanon War." It must now be clear to even the most confirmed "doves" that nothing that Israel could do, any further "sacrifice" that Israel would be prepared to bring, would satisfy the Arabs. The sad but irrefutable conclusion is that only the complete disappearance of Israel, its annihilation, its being "wiped off the map," the excision of this "cancer" could satisfy the Arabs and most of the Muslim world.

Mortal hatred and the "Big Lie." The "Big Lie," invented by the notorious Joseph Goebbels of Nazi infamy, is a mainstay of Arab hatred and propaganda. In Egypt and Jordan (the two Arab countries technically at peace with Israel), government-controlled news sources published that Israel had distributed drug-laced chewing gum and candy to kill children and to make women sexually corrupt. The Jews (Israelis) are being accused of having introduced foot-and-mouth disease in the Middle East. The age-old calumny of Jews using the blood of Christian and Muslim children in order to bake their Passover matzos is alive and well in Arab publications. Translations of Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf" and the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" are steady best-sellers in all Arab countries. Among other malevolent fabrications, it accuses "international Jewry" of "limitless ambition, inexhaustible greed, and hatred beyond imagination."

In the controlled Arab press, Holocaust denial and accusation of the Zionists having been in cahoots with the German Nazis are regular features. Egypt's government-sponsored Al Akhbar newspaper has expressed fervent thanks to Adolf Hitler for having taken advance revenge on the "vilest criminals on the face of the earth." Still, it berated him for not having been thorough enough in his task of extermination. The Arabs do not consider Israel a normal country, but a creation of the devil, an excrescence, a malignant force of aggressors, murderers, infidels and barbarians. It should be destroyed, for the glory of God, no matter what sacrifices that might entail.

Mortal hatred against Israel and against the Jews is taught to Arab children from the very first grade. Children are encouraged to sacrifice themselves as martyrs and to become suicide bombers and human missiles, with promises that Paradise with unimaginable pleasures awaits those who sacrifice themselves in the holy cause of killing Jews.

This bottomless hatred, a hatred that pervades the Arab world in all strata of society and is incessantly fomented by Arab governments, including those supposed to be "at peace" with Israel, cannot be assuaged by negotiation or by making any further "sacrifices for peace." Nothing will suffice, except the destruction of Israel. The Arab states, having been unable in almost sixty years and in many wars to defeat and exterminate the Jews, are now feverishly arming themselves with "conventional weapons" (easily purchased from the West, including, sad to say, from the United States), and are ardently pursuing the development of weapons of mass annihilation. Just as the suicide bombers do not vacillate to sacrifice themselves, one can safely expect that, once in possession of such weapons, the Arabs will not hesitate to sacrifice millions of their own people in order to destroy Israel. Israel's only course in the face of this almost certain prospect is to assume its previous stance of unflinching deterrence and, as it once did in the destruction of the Iraqi atomic reactor at Osirak in 1981, not to be inhibited by "international opinion" to preempt resolutely if it appears necessary to assure survival of the country.

This ad has been published and paid for by

FLAME

Facts and Logic About the Middle East
P.O. Box 590359 ■ San Francisco, CA 94159
Gerardo Joffe, President

FLAME is a tax-exempt, non-profit educational 501 (c)(3) organization. Its purpose is the research and publication of the facts regarding developments in the Middle East and exposing false propaganda that might harm the interests of the United States and its allies in that area of the world. Your tax-deductible contributions are welcome. They enable us to pursue these goals and to publish these messages in national newspapers and magazines. We have virtually no overhead. Almost all of our revenue pays for our educational work, for these clarifying messages, and for related direct mail.

To receive free FLAME updates, visit our website: www.factsandlogic.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Binge and Surge

TRB
FROM WASHINGTON

IN IRAQ, SADLY, THE TROOP SURGE planned by George W. Bush probably won't make much difference. After all, the United States has already surged—the military sent several thousand more troops to Baghdad last summer—and the violence only got worse. Moreover, the intellectual architects of a new surge—retired General Jack Keane and the American Enterprise Institute's Frederick Kagan—say it will require 30,000 more troops over 18 months to have a chance of success. But, according to most press reports, Bush is talking about no more than 20,000, and military officials say that number can't be sustained for more than six months or a year. Some liberals don't like the term "surge," demanding that journalists call Bush's plan an "escalation" instead. But, if the military is to be believed, "surge" is actually correct, because the United States can't maintain a long-term escalation, which is one reason Bush's plan will almost certainly fail.

But, if the surge makes little difference in Iraq, it could make a profound difference in the United States, shaping the way Americans see the war for years to come. Even as Bush makes a last stab at victory, the "who lost Iraq?" debate is well underway. And, like all such debates, there are two main factions: those who believe the war was not winnable and those who believe it was—had we only taken off the gloves.

The last time the United States endured such a debate, over Vietnam, the hawks more than held their own. One of Vietnam's great ironies is that, rather than empowering the American left, it ended up empowering the American right. It was in Vietnam's aftermath that the conservative movement, after decades in the political wilderness, finally seized power. It did so in part by blaming the antiwar movement—which had burrowed deep within the Democratic Party—for America's defeat and by claiming, as Ronald Reagan told the Conservative Political Action Conference in 1974, that the real "lesson of Vietnam" was that the United States didn't "pledge our full resources to achieve victory."

Now, because of the surge, that's going to be very hard to say about Iraq. The blame game has already been different this time around because conservatives are in charge. During Vietnam, when the White House was occupied by liberals (John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson) and moderates (Richard Nixon), hawks could carp about a lack of presidential will. George W. Bush, by contrast, has always been the right's guy, and thus, harder to tag as a weak-kneed dove.

Nonetheless, for three and a half years, Iraq hawks have had an alibi: The United States didn't have enough troops. From the editors of *The Weekly Standard* and *National Review* to John McCain, conservatives have demanded that Donald Rumsfeld be sidelined and his light-footprint strategy be ditched. Now, they're finally getting their wish: Rumsfeld is gone, and his Iraq policy is about to follow. Last month, Keane and Kagan wrote: "The United States faces a dire situation in Iraq because of a history of half-measures." How will they explain Iraq's "dire situation" a year from now, after the Bush administration has abandoned half-measures and embraces the all-out effort that they demand?

That question must keep McCain's advisers up at night. In Vietnam, the right's advice was never followed and, thus, never came up for a vote. When Reagan called Vietnam a "noble cause" in 1980, he was stoking a myth of national innocence and invincibility for which beleaguered Americans yearned. But he could do so precisely because his preferred policies on Vietnam had never been tried. In 2008, by contrast, Iraq won't be a symbolic issue. Americans will still be dying, and the catastrophe will still be deepening, largely because of policies clearly identified with the likely Republican presidential nominee. McCain can claim that, by sending only 20,000 troops, Bush didn't surge *enough*—and, thus, his preferred policy didn't fail. But that will look like quibbling. Already, presidential hopeful John Edwards has dubbed Bush's surge "the McCain Doctrine," and, with public support for a surge near single digits, Democrats will likely make that a central thrust of their campaign to retake the White House.

So far, it's working. According to a December *Washington Post* poll, support for McCain has fallen 15 points among independents—once his political base—since March 2006. And, in several surveys, his lead in a hypothetical face-off against Hillary Clinton, which once regularly topped ten points, has dwindled to nothing. That has a lot to do with his stance on Iraq, and, with the war about to escalate, his slide may well continue. By next year, McCain's government-reforming, straight-talking image could be largely eclipsed by his role as cheerleader-in-chief for an Iraq policy Americans can't stand.

Give McCain his due: He's acting from conviction. He's doing exactly what pundits always demand of politicians—ignoring the consultants, ignoring the polls, and doing what he thinks is right. At this point, McCain's position probably hurts him even in the Republican primary. It's one of the more remarkable episodes in recent political memory.

But, by following his gut, McCain may send U.S. politics in exactly the direction he hopes it does not go. If Iraq is the issue in 2008 and Democrats win, it will dramatically alter the politics of foreign policy. Ever since Vietnam, it has been conventional wisdom that, in presidential elections, doves lose and hawks win. If Iraq sinks McCain's candidacy for president, that will go out the window. More dovish politicians will start looking politically viable and more hawkish ones won't.

In his 2000 campaign book, *A Charge to Keep*, George W. Bush wrote that the lesson of Vietnam was that "we must not go into a conflict unless we go in committed to win." Now, by sending more troops to Baghdad, Bush is showing his commitment to win—except that the United States has already lost. As a result, future presidents will likely say the lesson of Iraq is that the United States should not go into a conflict unless we are *able* to win, which is a very, very different thing.

PETER BEINART

Peter Beinart, editor-at-large, is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

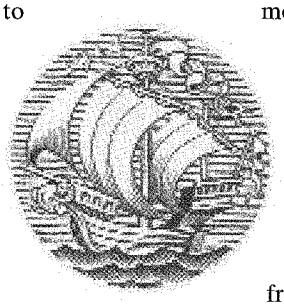
Left Behind

EACH MORNING, AS the sun rises over the streets of Baghdad, the bodies appear—burned, slashed, drilled, sometimes handcuffed, and, as often as not, decapitated. Many are the victims of sectarian violence, but this depressingly familiar fate does not account for all of them. There are also the bodies of Iraqi liberals, U.S. Army translators, and others who were killed for their association with the Americans. Indeed, entire populations (Christians, Yezidis, and other non-Muslim groups) have been targeted for their support of the occupation—support imagined, as often as not, by their persecutors. For the sin (or simply the perception of the sin) of aiding the Americans, insurgents in Iraq slaughter fathers in front of their children, murder democracy activists in the streets, and hunt down Iraqis leaving the Green Zone.

So, no, the debate over "surging" troops into Iraq cannot conceal what every American knows to be true: The end game has begun, and we all know how it will end. In Baghdad and in Washington, history is being replayed. As with Robert McNamara before him, the failed architect of this war has been promoted to chief of the World Bank. As with William Westmoreland before him, the failed ground commander has been promoted to Army chief of staff. And, as with Lyndon Johnson before him, George W. Bush has been reduced to his own private hell. But it pales in comparison to the hell inhabited by Iraqis.

Washington has many debts still to pay in Iraq. But it has a special obligation to protect the tens of thousands of Iraqis who cast their lot with the Americans. Some of them are friends and associates of this magazine, and we are, to put it gently, tormented about what will become of them. There are Iraqi drivers and fixers who have disappeared—whether into hiding or graves, we do not know. There are human rights activists who have not been heard from. For years, we have worked with bright, young, and idealistic Iraqis who now, with the Iraqi Health Ministry reporting the country's 2006 civilian death toll at 22,950, desire nothing more than a visa to the United States—a reward they have no way of collecting. Even Iraqis who have made it to these shores—among them a U.S. Army interpreter medevaced to the United States after a roadside bomb shattered his body during a U.S. patrol—may soon be forcibly repatriated.

Washington's response to all this? Even as hundreds of thousands flee Iraq, in 2005, the United States offered refuge to a paltry 200 Iraqi refugees. (See George Packer, "Save Whomever We Can," November 27, 2006.) The reasons for this are as convoluted as they are senseless. There is the U.N. referral system, designed to identify refugees in need but broken beyond repair. There are America's post–September 11 immigration restrictions, which treat endangered Iraqi Christians as if they were havoc-bent Islamist radicals. There is the indefensible policy of refusing to grant visas from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, forcing Iraqis in search of asylum to make perilous and expensive journeys to the embassy in Jordan instead. And, above all, there is the transparent fiction that Iraqis, now liberated, no longer endure systematic persecution: No Saddam, no problem. This conceit may comfort the sensibilities of the Bush administration, but the death toll in Baghdad points to a different truth.



For years, the excuse that American officials have used to reject more liberal immigration laws is that terrorists will exploit them. But are we really incapable of distinguishing a translator who has risked his life—and the safety and well-being of his family—to serve U.S. forces from an insurgent? If so, we're in even more trouble than we think.

Fortunately, under pressure from humanitarian organizations and the Baghdad press corps, American officials have pledged to revisit Washington's inscrutable immigration and asylum policies. Politicians like Senator Edward Kennedy and Representative Jan Schakowsky have been particularly tireless advocates of reform. If their efforts succeed, it won't be a moment too soon. That America's "decent interval" in Iraq will in all likelihood last for years and not months—loose talk about helicopters lifting off the embassy roof is, at best, premature—hardly diminishes the urgency of our Iraqi friends' plight. Baghdad may not be Saigon, but the pace of the killings justifies, at the very least, a stepped-up effort to extend asylum to Iraqis at risk and, equally important, to include their families in this category.

Having turned Iraq inside out, the United States owes much to the citizens of that wrecked country. But it owes even more to the Iraqis who risked everything in America's name. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Dems' karmic dilemma.

Pay it Forward

BY MICHAEL CROWLEY

HOURS AFTER Nancy Pelosi was sworn in as House speaker last week, Democratic Representative Rahm Emanuel held a celebratory reception at Johnny's Half Shell, an upscale Capitol Hill restaurant. Having just overseen his party's victorious campaign as chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), Emanuel resembled a mafia don who had taken down a rival family and was now receiving visitors (Harold Ickes, Paul Begala, James Carville) to kiss his ring. Filing into the restaurant along with the giddy Democrats, however, was a crowd with markedly longer faces. These were Republicans attending a reception for Arizona Senator Jon Kyl, he of the newly deposed Republican majority, in a private back room. From afar, the reception's mood seemed funereal, perhaps because attendees were forced to walk directly past a wall-mounted flat-screen television tuned to C-SPAN, which was displaying Democratic Representative Barney Frank presiding over House proceedings from the speaker's chair for the first time in twelve years.

The Democrats in attendance graciously pretended not to notice the bereaved in their midst. It couldn't have been easy. Heady with victory, Democrats are feeling feistier and cockier than they have in years. This headiness was symbolized earlier that day, when Democratic Representative Stephanie Tubbs-Jones of Ohio cast her vote to coronate Pelosi as speaker and then, with the whole House watching, broke out into a hip-hop jig known as the "cabbage patch"—a move that involves clasping one's hands and swinging one's arms as if churning butter. Such enthusiasm is understandable for Democrats, who waited more than a decade to regain power. Still, to some, turning the House floor into a dance floor sent a message of dubious taste. "You want to be magnanimous in victory, and then you see that," says a dismayed House Democratic leadership aide. "Show some class!"

Class is a question foremost on the minds of Democrats these days as they obsess over their top goal: retaining their new majority. Although Democrats would love to kick Republicans while they're down, most agree with Maryland Democrat Chris Van Hollen, Emanuel's successor at the DCCC, who says voters are longing for "a more civil tone." Retribution is out. Truth and reconciliation are in. The job of Van Hollen and others, then, is to convince their fellow Democrats to choose civility over civil war. But, for many, doing so involves an epic battle between superego and id, between reason and human nature, between the dignified handshake and the cabbage patch.

IN THE AFTERMATH of their November triumph, Democrats sounded positively liberated. Flush with the endorphins only an electoral mandate can bring, they were at last free to speak their minds. The tone was set by the now-infamous encounter between newly elected Democratic Senator Jim Webb and George W. Bush at the White House, in which Webb responded to the president's inquiry about his son in Iraq with a folksy fuck-off ("That's between me and my boy"). Then there was an epidemic of air rage, in which Democrats invaded hostile Fox TV territory to pummel conservatives—perhaps inspired by Bill Clinton's epic dress-down of Chris Wallace in a September interview. Leading the way was Frank, who ripped into Wallace for "an odd view of balance" and for asking questions "aimed at trying to find points of controversy." He then appeared on "The O'Reilly Factor," where he denounced its host as a "silly would-be district attorney." (O'Reilly called Frank "dopey" in response.) Incoming Ways and Means Chairman Charles Rangel, meanwhile, had a similar post-election duel with Fox's Sean Hannity, whom he addressed as "Mr. Prosecutor" while mocking Fox's "Fair and Balanced" slogan.

Democrats have also rediscovered the allure of raw power. After complaining for years about the way Republicans ran the legislative process in the House, Democrats announced that the new GOP minority would have no opportunity to offer bills or amendments as they ram through their "First 100 Hours" agenda—a hint that living up to their solemn pledge to run the House in a more open fashion will be easier said than done. That's especially true given that some House Democrats believe in a Machiavellian approach. One of them is said to be George Miller of California, perhaps Pelosi's closest adviser. According to a recently departed House Democratic aide sympathetic to the leadership but in favor of open rules, Miller's people "don't give a shit about openness. They don't care about the process. Those guys really are interested in passing an agenda and wielding power."

Yet Democrats seem to understand that voters could easily perceive swaggering talk and strong-arm tactics as DeLayism, Bay Area–style. "We think one of the messages sent in the last election is that the public expects a more open and fair process," says Van Hollen. Even some of the House's most liberal members admit that tone matters, too. "We know we won in part because [Republicans] got so nasty and unlikable," Frank himself recently admitted to *The New York Times*—a guideline that apparently escaped the cranky representative during his recent TV appearances.

STILL, THE IMPULSE for payback is easy to understand. In 2003, I wrote a story about the misery of being a Democrat in the GOP House, which had come to operate with all the parliamentary freedom of the North Korean Communist Party (see "Oppressed Minority," June 23, 2003). My subject was Van Hollen, whom I followed for a few days as he tried in vain to secure

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a vote on an amendment critical to his civil service worker constituents. After one summary rejection, Van Hollen suggested that Republicans should bring democracy to the House before imposing it on Iraq. (Miller fumed to me at the time that the GOP was running the House in a "fascistic" and "corrupt" manner.)

Republicans aren't making it easier for Democrats to forgive and forget these traumatic memories by screaming bloody murder over any perceived slight. Although Democrats have vowed to make several rules changes affording the minority more power, the House GOP has already shamelessly offered up a "Minority Bill of Rights"—copied verbatim from a 2004 Democratic proposal (which the GOP ignored). Democrats found it especially maddening to hear a complaint last week from California Republican David Dreier, who, as outgoing chairman of the House Rules Committee, smothered countless Democratic bills and amendments in their cribs. Dreier pronounced himself "very disappointed" at the lack of a GOP role in the 100-hour agenda. "I couldn't believe my ears," sighs Louise Slaughter of New York, Dreier's incoming successor as Rules chair. "If Alice in Wonderland can believe six impossible things before breakfast, David Dreier can do better."

Such talk can hardly boost the Democratic spirit of magnanimity, which was fragile to begin with. As head of the DCCC, Van Hollen must suppress vengeful instincts in the name of preserving his party's precious majority, but he admits he recently flipped through my old article and reminisced about his cold dismissal by imperious Republican leaders—or, as he puts it, "sitting in front of the Rules Committee and getting the big 'nyet.'" Still, he insists, using a familiar Pelosi phrase, "We're not interested in getting even. We're interested in moving forward." But maybe also throwing in a cabbage patch or two. ■

Marty Lipset, RIP.

Exceptionalist

BY NATHAN GLAZER

SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET, the distinguished political sociologist who died on December 31, 2006, tells the story in a memoir of how he shifted in City College (CCNY) from science—as a prelude to dentistry—to sociology. During the Depression, the only member of his family who prospered was a dentist uncle, and that seemed the road to security. But Pete Rossi, a fellow student and member of the Trotskyist Young People's Socialist League, told him that sociology was the way to go—it could lead to a career in social work, and, because there would always be people in trouble in capitalist societies, there would always be jobs for social workers. I was a classmate of Lipset's, thinking much the same way. After trying various majors, I too shifted to sociology, with my eye on the federal exam for junior professional assistant, which, if one passed it, led to a job that paid $17 a week. Clearly, none of us young advocates for socialist revolution—which might have obviated the need to make a living under capitalism—were taking its near-possibility very seriously.

Still, we all migrated to the anti-Stalinist Alcove One in the CCNY cafeteria. (We never bought anything, instead bringing sandwiches from home.) Trotskyists, social democrats of various persuasions, and leftist Zionists (as I was) all hung out there. We learned from one another—not that I have any complaint about the formal education CCNY provided. In his memoir, Lipset recalls the day Philip Selznick (also to become a distinguished sociologist) brought to the Alcove's attention Robert Michels's *Political Parties*. Michels was a revelation. He explained why socialist parties did not bring socialism; why and how they turned into bureaucracies; why, despite a commitment to democracy, they were not democratic; and, by extension, why the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia resulted in a totalitarian dictatorship. Michels set Lipset's agenda for a good part of his scholarly career. This was bracketed, at its beginning and at its end, by his inquiries into one particular question: Why was there no major socialist party in the United States? But Lipset also steadily considered, in many books, the question of how democracy is established and maintained, and how it can be lost, in organizations and in societies.

Lipset was unique among us in being able to start immediately on an academic career. Few of us dreamed of such a possibility. CCNY had one available fellowship, as far as we knew, and Lipset got it and went to Columbia. (He told me about the phenomenal Robert Merton, who later became my teacher.) And he ingeniously found, through his prodigious reading of newspapers and journals, a subject for a dissertation that addressed his central concerns: Saskatchewan, a western Canadian province and the only state in North America that had elected a socialist government. Lipset went off to study how it had happened and with what consequences. He also considered why it didn't happen right across the border in North Dakota, which had a very similar economic structure and economic conditions—and where the Non-Partisan League, a radical organization similar to the socialist Cooperative Commonwealth Federation that had taken power in Saskatchewan, was also dominant. This led him to ponder the differences between Canada and the United States, and to a lifelong interest in how the historically determined structures of societies set limits for their development that are difficult to transcend. Canada (that is, Anglophone Canada) was set on its course by the fact that it did not break with England through revolution, and it was further influenced by American emigrants who opposed the revolution and the break with Great Britain. Canada was conservative; its conservatism paradoxically made possible in time its welfare state, similar to those in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Europe, shaped by both far-sighted conservative politicians and their socialist opponents. The United States, in contrast, was individualistic and anti-statist. Its egalitarianism was more social than economic and aimed at equality in opportunity rather than in achievement.

Agrarian Socialism was the book that resulted, and it was stage one in Lipset's lifelong effort to understand why the United States, alone among the major industrialized countries, never has had a mass socialist party. In the course of his career, Lipset addressed the issue again and again, and it was also the subject of his last book (with Gary Marks), *It Didn't Happen Here*. Initially, he put great weight on the contrast between America's electoral system, with its winner-take-all presidential elections, and parliamentary systems, which seemed to foster minority parties. But, in time, Lipset discounted the significance of these differences, as he noted the third-party threats of George Wallace, John Anderson, and Ross Perot. Rather, he concluded, it was American values—individualism, anti-statism, a distinctive kind of egalitarianism—that explained the country's indifference to socialism.

Lipset, along with so many radicals of the 1930s and 1940s, evolved into an admirer of the United States: its political system, its open society, its democracy, its opportunities—from which he and his friends had benefited. This embrace of America helped turn Lipset away from socialism. I recall running into him the morning after the 1948 election. We had both voted for Norman Thomas but were so happy that Harry Truman, surprisingly, had won. What did that tell us about our socialism?

Lipset's evolution made him, along with other social scientists of his generation and background, targets of the new student left of the 1960s. He and his old radical friends who had joined him in the academy discovered, in the period of student unrest, that they appreciated the role of universities as homes for independent thinking, they saw no reason why the authority of these institutions should be undermined, and they found leftist student obstruction of research for the national interest or on-campus recruiting for government agencies excessive and unjustified. Lipset was not particularly involved, as many social scientists were, with the Defense Department and research in support of U.S. foreign policy. But his studies of the conditions that made for democracy in developing societies, one of his central interests, made him a leading authority on the politics of important sites of our worldwide competition with Soviet communism and were useful for government-sponsored research. And his friendships with leading social scientists who conducted this federally funded and pragmatically oriented social research designed to promote national aims seemed to ally him with them.

As the student left became more and more hostile to what it dubbed Amerika, Lipset, with his deep appreciation of America, moved further to what he considered the center—and what the student radicals considered the right. He may not have called himself a neoconservative as that tendency emerged in the 1970s, but the neoconservatives were part of his intellectual and social circle: He wrote for their journals, and his research increasingly emphasized the role of values as opposed to class and economic interests. One of his most provocative and disputed articles was "Democracy and Working-Class Authoritarianism," which observed that while the poor "are everywhere more liberal when it comes to [economic] issues . . . when liberalism is defined in non-economic terms—so as to support, for example, civil rights for political dissidents, civil rights for ethnic and racial minorities, internationalist foreign policies, and liberal immigration legislation—the relation is reversed." Marxist and socialist sociologists did not like this, even though the conclusion came from research rather than ideology. Lipset could not have been surprised by Wallace's support among industrial workers when he ran for national office.

But Lipset, who always thought of himself as a liberal and never, I would guess, voted for a Republican for president, did not see Wallace and other third-party movements as harbingers of fascism, as some alarmed liberals did. He studied and wrote on the history of extreme right-wing movements—anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic, anti-black, and anti-immigrant—that have risen again and again in the United States, but he saw these as anomalies in the American experience. He had faith in America. In his most interesting and original book, *The First New Nation*, he played an important role in redefining U.S. nationality as something new in the world: It was based on ideas, principles, values, rather than on British origins, on Protestant religion, on whiteness; it was not the nationality of a primordial ethnic group, but something quite different. In principle, the entire world was eligible to become American.

In that book, Lipset also showed an appreciation for George Washington that is not common among intellectuals, who are generally attracted more by Jefferson or Hamilton or Madison. But it was Washington who, by giving up the leadership of the Army at the end of the revolution and passing on the presidency to his elected successor after two terms, set the pattern that made the United States a stable democracy. Writing at a time when new nations by the score were gaining independence and freedom, Lipset saw this as an excellent—indeed, crucial—model for their founding fathers to follow. Alas, few did. Lipset went as far as anyone in defining the conditions that make for democratic success. And there is much in his writings that could help us understand why we have done so badly as we try to establish liberal democratic regimes in unlikely parts of the globe. ■

TNR Archives

More than 90 years of news, opinion, and criticism at your fingertips. tnr.com/archives

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Guess who's coming to Seder.

Dewinter's Tale

BY SARAH WILDMAN

On a balmy day in Antwerp's medieval city center, not far from the offices of Vlaams Belang, the right-wing Flemish nationalist party, the boulevards were crowded. At a clogged artery on a main thoroughfare, as the light turned, a tram pulled away and a van driven by an orthodox Jew—side curls and black yarmulke visible—became stuck in the pedestrian crossing. Walkers, annoyed, muttered to themselves. And then, from the back of the crush, a group of teenage boys began to yell, "Fucking, fucking yood!" and to bang their fists on the car.

It was just the sort of incident that riles Filip Dewinter, the 44-year-old leader of Vlaams Belang. Dewinter's party, like its far-right counterparts across Europe, has a long history of racism and xenophobia. But sitting in his office, filled with sleek Italian-style furniture and overseen by a massive Rubens painting of Nicholas Rockox, a mayor of Antwerp in the mid-seventeenth century, Dewinter's anger takes a surprising turn. "We should stand with the Jewish community, and we should do everything possible to protect them," he says. "Jewish values are European values!" Then he launches into an earnest plea for Jews to come home to his extreme-right—"right-wing," he gently corrects—party.

Dewinter is at the forefront of Europe's new philosemitic far right. Along with his French homologue, Marine Le Pen, daughter of Holocaust minimizer and Front National leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, Dewinter has spent the last few years proclaiming his support for Jews and championing their rights. No matter that Vlaams Belang's founders were Nazi collaborators or, simply, that the idea of the Jew as "European" is itself a novelty for his base constituency. Since 2003, Dewinter has loudly and consistently spoken out against attacks on Jews—calling Judaism a "pillar of European society" to *Time* magazine and condemning anti-Semitism and, very specifically, anti-Zionism, to *Haaretz* and *New York Jewish Week*. This fall, when elections fell on Sukkot and religious Jews would have missed going to the polls, it was Dewinter's party that helped collect their proxy ballots. In October, he promised the press he would bring in one-third of the Jewish vote on Election Day and told *Haaretz* that Jews were his "brothers in arms." This may seem like a positive development, but Dewinter's newfound love of the Jewish people conceals some very unbrotherly motives.

Sarah Wildman is a senior correspondent for The American Prospect *and a recipient of the Milena Jesenska Journalism Fellowship from the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, Austria.*

Filip Dewinter has been committed to the far-right Flemish cause since his teens. Born in the tourist-friendly town of Bruges, Dewinter moved to Antwerp to attend university at 18 and quickly became active in radical Flemish separatism, founding the student movement that became aligned with Vlaams Blok, an extreme-right Flemish nationalist party formed in the late '70s. Known for his militant views and brawls with liberal students, Dewinter was eventually groomed for office by the founder of Vlaams Blok, Karel Dillen, a man infamous in European anti-racism circles for translating the works of French neofascist Maurice Bardèche into Flemish. With Dillen's urging, Dewinter became, at 25, Belgium's youngest-ever Parliamentarian. By the early '90s, Vlaams Blok was winning big in Antwerp and worrying mainstream politicians. "We loudly say what people quietly think," Dewinter would say.

Under Dewinter's leadership, Vlaams Blok continued its xenophobic positioning. In 2002, Dewinter and his colleagues ran on the platform "*Eigen Volk Eerst!*": "Our People First!" The slogan, also the title of a book Dewinter wrote in 1989, appeared to echo the 1930s mantra of Flemish fascist nationalists, "Antwerp is Ours! Jews Out!" Posters were festooned with images of a broom (sweeping out bad elements), another '30s image. That same year, Dewinter publicly called for Austrian Nazi sympathizer Jörg Haider, the former leader of the controversial Freedom Party, to lead a Europe-wide far-right movement.

But, unlike his far-right counterparts in other European countries, Dewinter carefully refrained from anti-Semitic rhetoric. The targets of his ire were Islamic immigrants. Like France, Belgium had welcomed North African Muslim workers in the 1960s and the early '70s. When the work dried up, the workers stayed, encouraging family members to join them. By the '90s, Vlaams Blok was calling for wholesale deportations of unemployed immigrants, ending political asylum, and getting tough on crime—code for a moratorium on immigration. "In the beginning, their topics were mainly turning around Flemish nationalism, Flemish extremism, and the drive for the independence of Flanders," says Claude Marinower, a Jewish Antwerp parliamentarian with the Liberal Party. "Their breakthrough came when they switched priorities to foreigners and whatever has to do with foreigners and fear of foreigners."

At the same time, Dewinter also began to court Jews. His theory was simple: If Jews were targeted, especially by Muslim immigrants, then Jews and the far right were "natural allies." In 2003, he began condemning violence against Jews by North African youth—which had increased after the second intifada—and linking it to his party's advocacy of an end to immigration and deportation of illegal immigrants. "We are seeing the first pogroms in Belgium since World War II," Dewinter told the *Daily Telegraph* that year. "How can this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Friend of the Jews: Belgium's far-right party leader Filip Dewinter.

YVES HERMAN/REUTERS/LANDOV

be happening in a democratic country? We've got the most left-wing citizenship laws in Europe that let people have nationality after three years, even if they come illegally."

In 2004, the Belgian Court officially dismantled Vlaams Blok for incitement and racism. But Vlaams Belang, its successor, rose days later from its ashes. The party has toned down the anti-immigrant rhetoric—as Cas Mudde, a University of Antwerp political scientist, puts it, "Vlaams Belang rarely still mentions immigration or immigrants in its posters because there is no one in this country who doesn't know that the Vlaams Belang is against immigrants"—but the party's leadership and goals remain, more or less, the same. Violence against Jews is still useful fodder for campaign promises and evidence of the Islamic threat.

Dewinter's commitment to protect Belgium's Jews poses a tempting proposition. In the last six years, they have suffered a marked increase in attacks, including physical assaults and the firebombing of synagogues. In one recent incident, a gang of young North Africans attacked a group of Jewish teenagers, repeatedly stabbing one boy and leaving him with a punctured lung. And, for years, many Jews have been uncomfortable with the way their liberal representatives talk about, and relate to, Israel—a concern that Dewinter has shown he is acutely aware of. "Socialists and Greens are Israel's most dangerous foes in Europe," he e-mailed me, echoing previous statements he has made to Jewish constituents and to the press. "They even tend to identify Israel and Zionism with Nazism."

In November, Gidon Van Emden, an Antwerp-based policy officer of a liberal Jewish group, praised Dewinter's message. "The current coalition of socialists, liberals and Greens have done too little to combat the anti-Semitism and racism that are still found here," Van Emden wrote in the *Jerusalem Post*. "Dewinter has done a fabulous job of looking respectable to the Jews, taking consistently pro-Israel stances and creating good contacts with certain rabbis in the community."

BUT, IN HER cheerfully light-filled townhouse, surrounded by books she has penned on children in the Holocaust and Belgian Jewry, Brussels Liberal Party Parliamentarian Viviane Teitelbaum Hirsch is worried. Before the election, an Antwerp Jewish women's group invited her to explain why it should *not* vote for Vlaams Belang. "To the Jews of Antwerp, I always say the first victims of the extreme right are the Muslims. But the next ones on the list are the Jews," she warns. "And I find it very scary. As a European."

Indeed, Dewinter is a model of respect when it comes to discussing Jews—"Israel is an island of democracy and free speech," he tells me. "We should support them much more than we are doing now"—but a fiery bigot when it comes to Muslims. "If you visit some of our neighborhoods, you would think you are in the casbah of Marrakech, not in a Western European town anymore!" Dewinter practically shouts during my visit. "You can't integrate or assimilate a whole community who sticks together, who has nothing to do with our life, our civilization! At least an important minority of them despises us," Dewinter continues, catching his breath. "And if Turkey becomes a member of the European Union? Well!" he laughs. "Jews," on the other hand, "are a part of European culture."

But Teitelbaum Hirsch is not the only Jewish leader who is concerned by what she sees as Dewinter's championing of Jews as a way to spread hatred against Muslims. "Jewish people have suffered in their blood and flesh where racism can bring you," M.P. Marinower says, leaning back in a leather chair, his face pouchy and tired. Marinower's father survived Bergen-Belsen but died of a heart attack shortly thereafter. "How could a Jew be in favor of a party condemned for racism? And condemned specifically for ... ostracizing a part of society?" Agrees Teitelbaum Hirsch, "I think we have to act strongly to be the guardians of democracy," she says of both the Jews and the liberal parties, "and never leave any important principle to be defended by the extreme right, because we know their way of caring for it is not sincere."

Dewinter's critics also point out that his wooing of Antwerp's 15,000 Jews is a crass political calculation. Since the terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid, and London, xenophobia—especially against Muslim immigrants—has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

become an acceptable European cultural anxiety. Seizing an opening created by liberal and mainstream conservative politicians who have panicked in the face of failed integration policies, the far right's newfound love for Jews is designed to exploit this ever-expanding group of anxious voters.

It also helps Vlaams Belang rehabilitate its extremist image. Since 1991, every other party in Belgium, in a *cordone sanitaire*, has prevented Dewinter's party from joining government coalitions. But a widely publicized endorsement from a strategically placed rabbi—or, better yet, an invitation to Israel—could be their ticket to political legitimacy. Formerly fascist Italian parliamentarian Gianfranco Fini followed this path and emerged, rehabilitated, after touching down in the Holy Land in 2003. In that vein, France's Marine Le Pen has made pandering statements like Dewinter's, including a promise that the Jewish community "can count on us to defend it." "Vlaams Belang and the Front National are trying to become mainstream parties," says Jean-Yves Camus, a Paris-based researcher and expert on xenophobia in political discourse. "This is a big change. You still see [openly] anti-Semitic parties, but they are fringe movements."

As a political strategy, philosemitism seems to have worked for Vlaams Belang. On October 8, 2006, Dewinter led his party to win some 33.5 percent of Antwerp votes. Vlaams Belang picked up voters in the suburbs and gained everywhere else around Flanders. "The Vlaams Belang did extremely well," says Mudde, the political scientist. "It almost doubled its seats in local councils."

Exit polls don't ask for religious affiliation in Belgium. But voters lulled by Dewinter into believing his far-right party truly embraces Jews may be chagrined to hear what he is planning. Next year, Vlaams Belang will form a coalition in the European Parliament with two unapologetically anti-Semitic far-right Eastern European parties: Ataka, from Bulgaria, and the Greater Romanian Party. His face falls when his allies' anti-Semitic demagoguery is mentioned. "I am not happy about it," Dewinter declares, peeved by the turn of the conversation. "I don't have anything to do with it. Look, we have a large Jewish community in Antwerp, and we have very good relations with them, and I have always had a lot of respect for the Jewish community." He runs his fingers nervously through his hair and pivots the conversation back to his core message: "Because Jewish values are European values! And Jewish civilization is one of the roots of Western civilization. Rome, Greece, Enlightenment, and Jewish-Christian values. Those are the key words of our European civilization." ■

John Edwards: Poor man's candidate.

The Accidental Populist

BY JASON ZENGERLE

Last October, the United Steelworkers of America went on strike against Goodyear, leading some 13,000 of its members to walk off the job. Once they did, it was only a matter of time before John Edwards went to see them. Like a moth to a flame—or Al Sharpton to a police shooting—Edwards of late seems inexorably drawn to labor strife. As he has laid the groundwork for his 2008 presidential campaign, he has become a fixture at union rallies and on picket lines across the country. Striking janitors at the University of Miami; disgruntled Teamsters at a helicopter plant in Connecticut; beleaguered hotel workers campaigning for better wages and health insurance in Chicago, Los Angeles, even Honolulu—Edwards has visited them all, offering words of encouragement and solidarity at every turn. "When I hear of a group of courageous workers engaged in a historic struggle," he told the janitors in Miami last spring, "it is important to me to show that I am with them."

And so, in early November, about five weeks into the Goodyear strike, Edwards paid a visit to the United Steelworkers (USW) hall in Akron, Ohio. It was a cold Saturday morning just three days before the midterm elections, and USW Local 2 was hosting a rally to support both the strike and Ohio Democratic candidates. Nearly 500 Local 2 members were participating in the strike, and it seemed as if all of them had come to kick off their weekends at the squat, concrete building that sits in the shadow of the tiremaker's world headquarters. Some were taking a break from the picket lines to warm themselves with ten-cent coffee and glazed doughnuts; others were there to inquire about getting much-needed checks from the union's strike benefit fund. As they waited for the rally to start in the hall's central meeting room, large men in windbreakers and varsity-style letterman jackets emblazoned with the USW logo traded gossip about if and when they would be going back to work.

While they did, Edwards huddled with a dozen or so union officials in a small conference room. Although he is now 53, Edwards still has the same slim build, foppish brown hair, and preternaturally youthful face that made

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him such a bright young thing nearly a decade ago, when he was elected to the Senate from North Carolina. He's also managed to hold on to the same friendly, almost deferential manner—the one he inherited from his father, who said to his son that he could "tell if someone was talking down to me in 30 seconds"; the one he easily could have lost once he became important enough to have his own Secret Service detail. As he made small talk with his hosts, discussing college football and past labor events he had attended, he immediately put them at ease.

After a while, the conversation turned to the meeting's real purpose: preparing Edwards for his speech to the rally. In order to know precisely what words of solidarity to offer, he needed a background briefing—which the union officials eagerly provided, telling him about the perfidy of Goodyear and the terribleness of the strike as he nodded and murmured in agreement. But there was one piece of business even more pressing than what Edwards was going to say: what he was going to wear. He had arrived at the union hall dressed in the standard Saturday uniform for a stumping politician—V-neck sweater, Oxford shirt, and khakis. But that, of course, wouldn't cut it for a labor rally. And so, with the expectant look of a suitor offering his intended a diamond ring, an official handed Edwards a blue USW T-shirt.

There was just one problem. When Edwards put the shirt on, it was huge. Even though he was wearing it over two other pieces of clothing, it fit him like a muumuu, billowing out and away from his body. It clearly had been tailored for the sort of exceptionally large man who tends to belong to an industrial labor union, not for a politician who's a bit of a fitness freak. As Edwards stood awkwardly, the shirt's shoulder seams dangling around his elbows, one of the union officials, a giant with a tremendous gut, slapped him on the back hard enough to knock him forward. "It's OK!" he roared. "It makes you look skinny!"

LIKE THE SHIRT, Edwards's persona for the 2008 campaign—that of a combative champion of the working class—seems a strange fit. Although Edwards ran for president in 2004 as a populist, he did so as a sunny one—a disposition that appeared a natural extension of his congenitally cheerful personality. He dubbed his political organization the "New American Optimists" and presented himself as the "son of a millworker" whose later success as a lawyer and a senator was a hopeful story about American possibility. His stump speech, which called attention to the "Two Americas," was less an airing of grievances than a buoyant pledge to bridge the divide between rich and poor. And his policy proposals—including incremental reform of health care and micro-initiatives to help the poor—were fiscally friendly as well, showing that his populist heart was governed by a New Democrat brain.

Even when it came to campaign tactics, Edwards played nice. In the Democratic primaries, he abstained from going negative on his opponents—so much so that many assumed he was angling for the number-two spot on the ticket. And, after John Kerry gave him that spot, he didn't adopt the typical running mate's role of attack dog. When he faced off in his vice presidential debate against Dick Cheney—whom Democrats were hoping he would beat like a Darth Vader piñata—Edwards turned in a largely toothless performance. As one Edwards adviser puts it, "He was the smily, happy candidate."

But now, Edwards is trying to turn that smile into a snarl, or at least a frown of concern. Since losing the vice presidential race in 2004—and subsequently leaving the Senate and Washington—he has spent his time focusing on the forgotten and neglected corners of the United States and, to a lesser extent, the world. Acting as a sort of latter-day Tom Joad, he has visited not just picket lines but homeless shelters, disaster zones, and refugee camps. And, in his current quest for the presidency, he intends to make the plight of the people he has encountered in those places his central issue. Accordingly, he has ditched his past commitment to fiscally restrained Rubinomics and now favors universal health coverage and an expensive raft of other policy initiatives to lift Americans—and even people in other countries—out of poverty. When he officially announced he was running for president in late December, he did so not sitting next to his wife in the comfort of their family home in a Raleigh neighborhood called Country Club Hills—as he had in the 2004 campaign—but standing by himself in the debris-strewn backyard of a hurricane-damaged house in New Orleans's Ninth Ward. "This campaign," he declared, "will be a grassroots, ground-up campaign, where we ask people to take action."

It's a campaign that seems off to a promising start. Edwards's reinvention has moved him to the left of Hillary Clinton, which, in the Democratic primaries, should be a good location. And, while Barack Obama—presumably the other top-tier Democratic candidate—is also to Clinton's left, he will have to face the questions about experience, or lack thereof, that Edwards dealt with in 2004. The election calendar could also play to Edwards's favor, as he currently leads in public opinion polls of Democrats in Iowa, the site of the first caucus; is strong in South Carolina, which holds the second primary; and is tight with the all-powerful culinary workers union in Nevada, which hosts the second caucus. Indeed, according to *The New York Times*, no less an authority than Clinton herself has told associates that Edwards and Obama are her two biggest obstacles to the nomination.

Still, while Edwards's new incarnation may bring him certain advantages in the race, it's nonetheless a peculiar bit of political positioning. The Democratic primaries have not, after all, been terribly generous to pro-union populists (just ask Dick Gephardt), and it has been a generation or more since a national Democrat has gotten far by campaigning against poverty. Indeed, for all the political calculations that have presumably played into Edwards's shift, it seems as though something else has been at work, as well.

"I can tell you one thing that's changed for me, and it's very significant for me personally," Edwards told me in one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of several conversations we had in the weeks before he officially launched his campaign. "When I was running for president before, in 2003, 2004, I spent most of my time thinking about what I could do to be a better candidate." He paused, as if to let this confession sink in. "That's just not what I think about anymore," he went on. "Now what I spend my time thinking about is what I want to do as president of the United States." Often derided as "plastic" and "a lightweight" during his last national campaign, Edwards has, in other words, been searching for his own political essence, both as a source of gravitas and as a rationale for his continued presidential ambitions. And, in his role as a crusader for the working class, he seems to think he has found it.

IT'S HARD TO imagine a political defeat more devastating than the one Edwards suffered in November 2004. First, there was the shock of it: On the afternoon of Election Day, when he boarded a plane for Boston to await the official results, the early exit polls had convinced him—and the rest of the Kerry-Edwards campaign—that the Democratic ticket was on its way to victory; it was only a few hours later, after his plane landed, that he learned things didn't look so good. Then there was the frustration: The morning after the election, he participated in a campaign conference call and found himself alone in arguing that Kerry should not concede until the anecdotal reports of voting irregularities in Ohio were cleared up. But the truly crushing blow came immediately after Kerry's concession speech at Faneuil Hall, when Edwards and his wife Elizabeth paid a surreptitious visit to a Boston hospital. A few weeks earlier, she'd discovered a lump on her breast; then, a day after he lost the election, they were told that she had cancer.

John and Elizabeth Edwards have experienced tragedy before: In 1996, their 16-year-old son, Wade, was killed in a car accident. Both of them say that experience helped give them the strength to deal with her illness. Some family friends also believe that her cancer may have helped him better cope with his election defeat. "I never saw

DAVID COWLES

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him become this morose, bitter person muttering, 'But for Ohio, I'd be on top of the world,' " says Ed Turlington, a North Carolina lawyer who served as the chairman of Edwards's 2004 presidential campaign. "He just threw himself into getting Elizabeth well."

After a few weeks—once Elizabeth had chosen a course of treatment and been given a good prognosis by her doctors—Edwards turned to the question of what he would do next, since his Senate term was up and he was now looking for a job. He had a number of options. Outgoing Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe had pushed him to pursue that post. There were people encouraging him to write a campaign memoir or a book laying out a vision for the future of the Democratic Party; others wanted him to do a TV talk show. Some investment houses and law firms were interested in having him join them, as well. Around Thanksgiving, Edwards convened a meeting at his Washington house of his inner circle—Elizabeth, people who'd worked for him in the Senate and on his presidential campaign, longtime family friends—to discuss his future options. According to multiple participants, it didn't take him long to dismiss them all. What he wanted to do, he told those assembled, was focus his energies on fighting poverty.

Shortly thereafter, Edwards founded a poverty think tank at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which he has since used as both a base of operations and a vehicle to familiarize himself with academic research on the issue. Jacob Hacker, a Yale political scientist who attended a two-day seminar at the think tank last year, came away impressed. "It wasn't as if the presentations were by rabble-rousing Democratic activists calling for revolution," Hacker says. "There were some very technical social-science discussions, and he seemed very engaged by them." He also conducted his own version of fieldwork. Robert Gordon, a domestic policy adviser to Edwards, recalls a trip they took to a community development corporation in the small town of Washington, North Carolina. "It was a roundtable with regular people like you see in campaigns," Gordon says, "except there were no cameras, and the regular people were really down on their luck. There were a couple of people who'd had pretty serious drug problems, a few who had HIV. There was a woman who'd lived in a homeless shelter and who'd had her kids taken from her." When a minister at the meeting reminded the group that they were sitting next to a man who was almost vice president, Gordon says Edwards interrupted. "He said, 'I might have almost been vice president, but I am no better than anybody in this room.' "

Edwards explains his focus on poverty matter-of-factly. He ran for the Senate, and then the presidency, to "serve." (His successful career as a trial lawyer left him with no real need to make more money: In 2003, his net worth was estimated to be between $12.8 million and $60 million.) Even though he no longer held elected office—and was unsure as to whether he ever would again—he says his commitment to service remained, and poverty was the issue where he thought his service would be most valuable. "It felt to me like there was a huge void in national engagement on this issue," he told me, "and it was something I really cared about, so it was a natural fit." For public consumption, at least, it's as simple as that.

But Edwards's decision to focus on poverty almost certainly involved a political calculation as well. Although he is not someone for whom the presidency has been a lifelong ambition, his 2004 defeat clearly galled him. He may not have been muttering "but for Ohio" while Elizabeth was sick, but, since then, there has been some grumbling "but for Howard Dean's scream." Many in the Edwards camp believe to this day that Dean's televised outburst denied Edwards the momentum he'd earned by finishing a strong second in the Iowa caucuses. The clearest summation of this view can be found in Elizabeth's recent memoir, *Saving Graces*:

> We had always heard that two stories come out of Iowa, and what we wanted was for John to be one of them. If The Scream hadn't happened, Kerry and John would have been the stories coming out of Iowa. ... Since it did happen, Kerry and The Scream were the stories. And there was no New Hampshire bump.

No New Hampshire bump for Edwards (it went solely to Kerry instead) meant no nomination. Add to this Edwards's displeasure with Kerry's general election campaign—he privately complained that it wasn't aggressive enough in attacking President Bush or competing in some red states—and it appears he felt he was tantalizingly close to the White House or the vice president's office but for other people's mistakes.

And, while focusing on poverty might seem like an odd choice for someone once again eyeing the White House, it makes a certain sense if you view politics the way Edwards does. For a politician of such immense talent, one of the most remarkable things about Edwards is just how politically unformed he is. Prior to his own Senate campaign in 1998, he—unlike most people who make a fortune and then run for office—wasn't even a political junkie: He voted only about half of the time and gave relatively little money in campaign contributions. Since then, Edwards has become a ferocious political animal, preparing himself for campaigns the way he once prepped for trials; but his political knowledge and experience, in many respects, goes back only to the second half of the Clinton administration. And, during that time, of course, questions of authenticity and a candidate's character have dominated presidential campaigns.

This helps explain why Edwards seems to view the presidential campaign less as a contest between ideologies or even policy proposals than as a referendum on each candidate as a person. "Do I have the strength and character to lead this country? I mean, that's the question," he told me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The judgment should be made on vision, and strength, and character, and who you really are." In 2004, the perception (fair or not) of Edwards was that he was a young politician in a hurry, one defined more by personal ambition than a set of core convictions or a guiding vision for the country. But that's a much harder case to make about someone who has spent the last two years holding poverty seminars and visiting food banks. "Presidential campaigns are primarily about character and sort of a broad sense of priorities and values," says Harrison Hickman, Edwards's pollster. "In that sense, his attention to poverty as an issue defines a lot about where he comes from, about what he thinks the failings of the country are and what he thinks the priorities of the country are."

Nor does Edwards's crusade end at the water's edge. Lack of foreign policy experience was one of his greatest shortcomings in 2004, and, since then, he has been busy trying to make it a strong suit. First, of course, there is Iraq: As a senator, Edwards voted for the resolution authorizing Bush to use force—and defended that vote throughout the last presidential campaign—but, in November 2005, he became one of the first prominent Democrats who supported the war to say his vote had been a mistake. Speaking at an August rally for Democratic Senate candidate (and antiwar champion) Ned Lamont, Edwards reiterated his mea culpa. "I voted for this war. I was wrong. I should not have voted for this war," he told a crowd of several hundred Lamont supporters who had gathered in a courtyard at Yale Medical School. He then added a call for immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces: "We need to make it clear that we're going to leave Iraq, and the best way to make that clear is to obviously start leaving."

More broadly, Edwards—who, as a senator, wasn't a prodigious foreign junketeer—has become something of a globetrotter over the last two years, taking trips to Israel, Russia, China, India, and Uganda, among other exotic locales. And the lesson he has learned from those travels parallels what he has learned in the soup kitchens and union halls he's visited in this country. "We have two responsibilities," he told the Lamontsters. "One of those is to look after the interests of the United States of America. The second responsibility is to look after the interests of humanity."

Undoubtedly aware of the poor track record of foreign policy idealism in Iraq, Edwards tries to couch his call for American global do-goodism in realist terms. "The most important responsibility of the next president," he frequently says, "is to restore America's leadership in the world, because if we don't lead, there is chaos." But, for all the geo-strategic framing, Edwards's desire for increased U.S. engagement with the world sometimes seems to reflect the thinking of someone who has just recently realized how big—and how troubled—the world really is.

"We talk about poverty in America; poverty in America is moderate compared to poverty around the world," Edwards declared at the Lamont rally. He then proceeded to tell a story about how, "just before this past Christmas," he had visited some slums outside of Delhi. Asking the crowd to "picture in your mind for just a minute and be there with me," he described "little narrow alleyways filled with sewage, flies, animals everywhere" and how, amid all this misery, he saw "a little area about twice the size of this stage. There were four blankets laid out on the pavement, and there were probably 15 or 20 children on each blanket." He paused, waiting for his audience to let the picture develop in their minds. "And then I realized," he went on, his voice now tinged with wonder and regret, "these children were in school. This was their school."

It was a powerful story, told in a powerful fashion, but the crowd, while moved, also seemed somewhat puzzled. What was Edwards's point? That, while Lamont battled Joe Lieberman, there were children starving in India? So Edwards spelled it out for them, adding a final line to his tale. "And I walked away from there," he concluded, his voice now practically a whisper, "and I said to myself, 'Where is America?' "

On the second anniversary of one of the worst days of his life—the day that his running mate conceded the election and his wife was diagnosed with cancer—Edwards returned to the place where it all happened. He was in Boston to speak that night at an awards dinner for local community activists, although the trip also served as a convenient excuse to see his oldest daughter, 24-year-old Cate, who's attending Harvard Law School. (Edwards and his wife have two other children, eight-year-old Emma Claire and six-year-old Jack.) Before the speech, he met me at a seafood restaurant in his hotel for our first interview.

AP Photo/Alan Diaz

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He wasn't in a particularly good mood. He was battling a cold—which seemed to have been exacerbated by the chilly New England weather—and he'd recently tweaked his hamstring, which meant that he'd been unable to go for one of his five-mile runs. When a waiter came to take our order, Edwards curtly informed him, "We're not eating," and asked for an iced tea. But, eventually, as he settled into the interview, he seemed to relax. Still, to most questions I asked, he gave answers that were deeply rehearsed. His comment about the "enormous freedom to choose what I am most interested in doing and spending my time on" sounded a lot like the "enormous freedom [of] being able to do what I am now" that he'd boasted of to a crowd of Democrats in New Hampshire the previous year. The observation he made to me that "China is going to become the largest English-speaking nation on the face of the planet" was one he'd make to Charlie Rose a couple of weeks later. Even his seemingly candid admission that, in the last presidential campaign, he was focused on being a "better candidate" as opposed to a better president was, in fact, a line he's given to numerous reporters.

In all, Edwards seemed at pains to avoid saying anything too candid or potentially controversial. When I asked him for his response to Bill Clinton's contention, as quoted in *The New Yorker*, that he ran for president prematurely in 2004, he dodged: "I think it's the wrong way [for candidates] to think about running for president of the United States ... to evaluate what's in *their* best interest." (Elizabeth, for her part, is bracingly candid. When I later asked her about Clinton's comment, she shot back, "During the campaign, Bill Clinton was enormously supportive of John, constantly giving him advice and encouraging him in every conceivable way. At no point in my recollection did John ever get off the phone after a conversation with him where he said, 'Bill thinks it's too early for me.' Never. Not once." Was this just Bill trying to talk down a potential rival to Hillary? "I can come to the same supposition anybody else can about why he said that.") Even my mention of the strange coincidence of his being in Boston on the second anniversary of the traumatic day he spent here failed to elicit much of a response. "Is it really?" he asked, before quickly changing the subject to a retelling of his efforts to convince Kerry not to concede—a retelling identical to the one Elizabeth has laid out for public consumption in her book.

Presidential candidates, of course, are given to pat answers—partly because they're so often asked the same questions, partly because being candid carries so many risks. But Edwards's exceptional guardedness seems strange for a candidate who now makes such a fetish of authenticity—for a candidate, in fact, who makes a pointed distinction between guarded, pabulum-spewing politicians and candid, truth-telling leaders. "What happens with politicians," he recently told a public radio interviewer, "is that you're conditioned not to be yourself. You're conditioned to say the same thing over and over and over, because that's the safe route. ... We need a leader, or leaders, who are willing to be themselves, who'll tell the truth as they see it." Or, as he complained to me about the last presidential campaign, during which he seems to think he acted more like a politician than a leader: "It was just plastic, there was a lot of plasticity to it. You know—young, Southern, dynamic, charismatic, beautiful family, all that. People need to see who I am, what my character is." Which, come to think of it, sounds a lot like something Edwards says in a "behind the scenes" video his campaign recently posted on YouTube: "I actually want the country to see who I am, who I really am. ... I'd rather be successful or unsuccessful based on who I really am, not based on some plastic Ken doll you put up in front of audiences."

About the only time Edwards seemed to switch off autopilot during the interview was when he talked about poverty. "You should cut me off on this," he warned, "because I spend a lot of time talking about this." And he did. He talked about his various ideas for fighting poverty—raising the minimum wage, strengthening unions, reforming public housing, creating one million federally funded "stepping stone" jobs at nonprofits or government agencies. He talked about just how much he still had to learn and how even he sometimes felt despair about the intractable nature of the problem. "The cultural component of poverty and what feeds the cycle of poverty—I don't think I ever really got it until, like, for the fifteenth time I'm sitting with a 33-year-old, 32-year-old mother who has a 14-year-old who's having the third child," he said. "And you hear that and it's just, 'How will they ever get out?' You know, it's 'What can you do?' " He seemed genuinely offended when I asked him whether he was surprised that Americans' post-Katrina concern about poverty had waned so rapidly. "I think it's very superficial to suggest that there was interest [and] it's gone," he said. "It's not gone. It's still there. It's just not on the surface. ... It's deeper down."

A few hours later, Edwards went to one of those places where the interest in poverty was anything but buried: the dinner banquet honoring local community activists. It wasn't the hottest political ticket in Boston that night—that honor went to the final big campaign rally for Massachusetts Democratic gubernatorial candidate Deval Patrick, where Barack Obama was giving a speech. But the event seemed like an opportunity for Edwards, since it allowed him to speak to people who were fighting poverty—in other words, his people. He congratulated them for their commitment to "the great moral cause in America today," which, he noted, "is now the cause of my own life." But then Edwards launched into a speech that followed, almost to the letter, the same trajectory as our interview: the same policy proposals, the same observations, even the same revelatory anecdotes. "One of the things that I've been struck by in the work that we've been doing over the last several years is that you sit with a mother, a single mom ... and her 14-year-old daughter is giving birth to the third child. And it just feeds this cycle of poverty." What had sounded so fresh and genuine to me only hours before already seemed stale and scripted.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yet it was anything but to the people in the room. When Edwards finished his speech, the vast banquet hall rose as one and gave him a standing ovation. He left the banquet early to have dinner with his daughter, but, as he snuck out through the hotel's kitchen, he was mobbed by some of the waiters and waitresses who'd watched his speech from the wings. "I listened to what you said out there," one told Edwards, her voice breaking. "Thank you so much for saying it. It means a lot. Please keep saying it."

It's a sentiment Edwards hears frequently. Although his spiel may be pat, although his words may be overly rehearsed, he's still saying things that no other candidate in this presidential race seems prepared to say—things that probably need to be said. There's a difference, after all, between spontaneity and sincerity. In his previous profession as a litigating attorney, Edwards was famous for the emotional power of his closing arguments. Other lawyers would pack the courtroom to hear him offer the final brief on behalf of the family of the little girl who'd had her intestines sucked out by a pool drain or the little boy whose parents had been killed by a speeding tractor-trailer. That those closing arguments were rehearsed to the point where Edwards could deliver them in his sleep didn't make the sentiment behind them any less genuine—or, for that matter, less effective. Indeed, that sometimes seems to be Edwards's signal gift—the ability to find the thread of emotional truth even in a line he's recited 20 times before. It's what made him a successful lawyer and makes him a formidable presidential candidate.

THIS WAS NEVER more apparent than at the USW hall in Akron, where Edwards stood in his ill-fitting T-shirt as he waited for his turn to address the striking Goodyear workers. The speakers preceding him had offered stiff, stilted words of support to the workers—words that seemed to ring hollow to the crowd, which had grown anxious and restless. When Edwards's turn came, it wasn't hard to sense their skepticism. Here was a millionaire politician with Hollywood good looks who couldn't possibly know the first thing about what these workers were going through. But then Edwards stepped up to the podium, yanked the microphone out of its holder, and launched into his speech.

He began by striking his standard note of solidarity. He said that he had come to Akron on a "personal mission to stand with my brothers and sisters and for those who are standing up for men and women who have worked their entire lives and have earned dignity, and respect, and health care." He said the union was showing "backbone and courage to do what's right." What the workers were fighting for, after all, was a dignity that they already possessed and that their employer was trying to take away from them. "We're talking about standing up to protect what they're entitled to," he said. "That's what this is about."

Edwards went on in this vein for a little longer, casting the strike as part of a larger fight to honor the legacies of those who "have worked to make America what it is today." But, eventually, Edwards brought his speech—and the strike—back to himself. Although he didn't work in a tire factory, although he had every material possession a person could possibly desire, he wanted the striking workers to know that he truly understood their struggle. "I take this very personally," he said, as the crowd grew silent. "My mother and father have health care today because of the union. My brother, my only brother, and his family have health care today because of the union. This is a just and righteous cause. You stood up and made huge concessions for this company in 2003. You did what was right, and it's time to make Goodyear"—he said the company's name with a slight hiss—"do what they're supposed to do."

Before Edwards had even finished his sentence, the crowd began to whoop and cheer. He acknowledged the applause with a grin and a wave. "So I'm proud to be with you," he said, his words now nearly drowned out. The Goodyear strike would drag on for two more months and the USW, in the end, would agree to a contract with some provisions it once considered anathema. But, at that moment, as Edwards stood on the stage and the union hall reverberated with cheers, there was suddenly hope that a better outcome, and maybe even a better life, was possible. The T-shirt may have looked a little ridiculous on Edwards at first, but it turned out to be a perfect fit. ■

YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH
ייִוואָ
ייִדישער ווויסנשאַפטלעכער אינסטיטוט
www.yivo.org
Photo: Jill Krementz
16 JAN 07
-7:00 PM-
GALICIA
LEON WIESELTIER IN CONVERSATION WITH DANIEL MENDELSOHN
Mon amour
Photo: Matt Mendelsohn
Wieseltier and Mendelsohn,
two of America's pre-eminent critics and authors,
will compare notes on the torments and exhilarations
of their pilgrimages to the past.
YIVO INSTITUTE AT THE CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY | 15 WEST 16TH ST - NEW YORK CITY
TKTS: $15 / $7 students • Box Office: 917.606.8200 / www.ticketweb.com

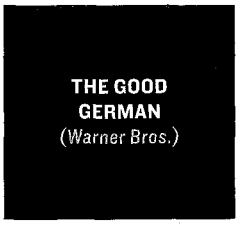
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Years Past

A WAR CORRESPONDENT FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC, in the Berlin of July 1945, gets beaten up four times in pursuit of a story but nonetheless keeps going. That is one way **THE GOOD GERMAN** could be described. Of course this is hardly all that goes on in Paul Attanasio's screenplay, based on Joseph Kanon's novel; still, I did enjoy seeing George Clooney play a colleague of mine with such magnificent powers of recuperation.



Clooney is Jake Geismer, who had been working for a newspaper syndicate in Berlin before the war and has returned, for TNR, to cover the Potsdam conference, attended by Truman, Stalin, and Churchill. Other matters interfere with his work, beginning with Jake's discovery that the driver assigned to him by the Army is now the lover of his prewar girlfriend. This blatant coincidence—I can't guess the statistical probability—is only the first step that leads away from the bleakness of postwar Berlin toward Movieland, where a lot of bombed buildings are just tristful background.

Ever since Rossellini's harsh *Germany Year Zero* (1947) and Wilder's wryly grim *A Foreign Affair* (1948), the sight of the smashed city has brought different responses at different times—the first surge of vengeance, the reality of destruction, the eventual slow regard for other human beings, the question of ultimate responsibility, the verdict on the entire human race. To see that devastated city again, sixty years on (created here with a blend of newsreels and settings), now has a new effect. The wan chance in 1945 for a fresh start through the uniting of nations has become a wan joke.

But this is to aggrandize *The Good German*, which doesn't use stony fact as an increment of good fiction in the way that Graham Greene and John Le Carré have done. The battered city becomes scenery for a flabby thriller. Through Jake's driver and the successively shared girlfriend, Jake gets tangled in a more personal and dangerous story than the Potsdam conference. (The inevitable warning line "You don't know what you're getting into" is growled at Jake several times by taciturn big shots whom he interviews.) Nonetheless he persists with several officers, American and Soviet, searching for something that is not quite clear to him. The search has little cumulative excitement—it is a series of conversations rather than a crescendo—and it finishes with a secret that is pretty close to predictable.

The director, Steven Soderbergh, said that he wanted to make a 1940s film about a 1940s subject, but he seems uncomfortable—an observer of the period rather than a native inside looking out. There is almost a hint of the patronizing in his treatment. And, somewhat heavy-handedly, he underscores his period tour with visual references to *The Third Man* and *Casablanca*. (The easiest period touch: the Americans smoke incessantly.) The cinematography, which Soderbergh did himself under the name Peter Andrews, is in black-and-white that is far inferior to the best of that time. Most of the lighting of faces is either tabloid flashes or, especially with the girlfriend, sentimentalized fake "portrait" shots.

Cate Blanchett, a long way from the Katharine Hepburn she played in *The Aviator*, tries to make a more coarsely worn Marlene Dietrich out of the girlfriend, a woman who has apparently bedded her way through the war, struggling to hold on to some shreds of her soul. But Blanchett shows us what she wants to do rather than doing it. Tobey Maguire, who plays the slimy driver, gets on my nerves. Jack Thompson, as a ubiquitous congressman, is unquestionably ubiquitous.

Still, I could have managed to bear all the film's shortcomings if it weren't for Clooney. Where *was* he during the making of this film? His face is there, he knows his lines, he moves as needed, but any traces of the intelligence and rapport, the subtlety and understanding, that have marked his best work are excruciatingly missing. Clooney behaves as if he discovered after he had committed to the film that he really didn't like the script as much as he thought he did but would go through with it anyway. The result is puppetry.

I have never written a "Ten Best" list at the end of a year, because I think the number is arbitrary—why not fourteen or six?—and because "best" is too imperial. No critic is likely to have seen absolutely all of the films that have some claim to attention and thus cannot make completely fair choices. "Favorite films" would be more apt, without a statutory number.

But this year I lean toward some sort of account because of the recurrent groans in the press about the sorry state of film. The disparity between these laments and my own experience is startling. Looking back through the last twelve months, I discovered that, though I hardly saw all the possible candidates, I had found eighteen films that are decisively and memorably of value to an intelligent viewer. They are: *Brokeback Mountain*, *Caché*, *Fateless*, *Friends With Money*, *L'Enfant*, *Down in the Valley*, *Only Human*, *Gabrielle*, *Edmond*, *The Bridesmaid*, *The Illusionist*, *Old Joy*, *The Queen*, *Climates*, *Flags of Our Fathers*, *Copying Beethoven*, *The History Boys*, *The Secret Life of Words*. (Comment on each of these titles, if wanted, is in the TNR archives online.) Eighteen! People who read more novels and see more theater than I do these days will know if they encountered eighteen equally interesting books or plays last year. (And I have named only fictional works, not even such documentaries as the ones about Tony Kushner and Robert Wilson.) The film year for me has been just

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the opposite of what it has been, apparently, for some others.

Of course they are looking principally at Hollywood, and my list has only six American pictures. But don't films from abroad and from independents affect any fair conspectus of the art? In fact, my own concern is that we have fewer foreign films than we used to get: expenses have diminished film importing. Isn't the viewer of film entitled—obliged—to be as cosmopolitan as an art critic or music critic? (Subtitles certainly facilitate it.) There is an old argument that people who live in major cities can't really judge the state of film because they have more program choices than those who live elsewhere. This argument no longer holds. Tapes and DVDs and television outlets make many foreign and independent pictures available in Podunk, often with a time lapse of less than a year.

So despite the recurrent croakings in the press, with all its mourning for the "Golden Age" of the past, I am grateful to 2006 for its bounty, and I can't help looking ahead to 2007. In the film world, anyway. ■

Anthony Grafton

Getting the Word Out

IN THE BEGINNING: BIBLES BEFORE THE YEAR 1000
Edited by Michelle P. Brown
(Smithsonian, 360 pp., $45)

THE NUMINOUS OBJECTS displayed in "In the Beginning," the exhibition of Bibles from before the year 1000 at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C., are beautiful, and their arrangement helps the visitor to the show (and the student of its extraordinary catalogue) see important things in a new light. Beauty first: the archipelago of dimly lit vitrines that stretches through several dark rooms reveals handwritten Bibles as genuine works of art. These illuminated manuscripts really glow. The varied and elegant scripts, the wild decorations and superbly drawn figures that populate their pages, have all been set free for a time, after hundreds of years of incarceration between closed covers. They create a silent riot of gorgeous colors, elegant lines, and stunning, unexpected patterns—as when, in a Hebrew manuscript now in Saint Petersburg, tiny lines of text and rich repeating patterns combine to make a golden image of the Ark of the Covenant.

The figures dominate. In an eighth-century British manuscript, a handsome Matthew stares gravely from a niche, flanked by neat curtains, holding a scroll, while an angel hovers above him with a book. All is quiet, weight, authority. Meanwhile, in a fifteenth-century Ethiopian codex of the Gospels, slim bearded figures stare out at the viewer as they stab upward at a cross between two others, on which men hang. But their spears strike only air. The cross is empty, for Jesus is already risen. Here, all is movement, pattern, lightness. In a tenth- or eleventh-century Slavic manuscript, two figures so abstract they look like sketches by Giacometti represent the inspiration of Saint Mark. In the Old English Genesis, written in the same period at the other end of the Christian world, fluent lines in bright red and green mark out the long, stylized hands and expressive, lifelike faces of divine and human figures with startling lucidity and grace.

All these images leave a deep impression, but some of them are genuinely haunting. In a Byzantine manuscript, the prophet Jeremiah stands against a field of gold, his eyes shadowed by the terrible knowledge that he must carry God's message until it consumes him along with the unbelievers who deny it. The blessing and the burden of divine knowledge are visible in other faces as well: for example, those of the four evangelists, depicted in encaustic, with heavy outlines and bright colors that look forward to Rouault, on the seventh-century binding of the Washington Codex of the Four Gospels. The binding is even more beautiful than the manuscript, itself written with miraculous clarity, in Greek, in the late fourth or early fifth century. To look into these painted eyes is to appreciate in a new way the greatness and the power of Jewish and Christian art.

Many curators content themselves with displaying images. The organizers of "In the Beginning" have done something much harder: they have arranged the materials, and explicated them, to educate the public about a lost world. The exhibition, which was executed in partnership with the Bodleian Library in Oxford, begins, magnificently, with a heap of scraps: unidentified bits of papyrus and parchment from the immense haul discovered in the Cairo Genizah in the late nineteenth century, much of which Solomon Schechter brought back to Cambridge. Even better, the vitrine that holds them stands before an enlarged photograph of Schechter himself, formally dressed in coat and tie. Bearded and saturnine, the great scholar clutches his forehead as he contemplates one of the thousands of texts that had to be catalogued and identified and reassembled like so many lost mosaics before the Genizah could release its secrets about the history of Judaism and Christianity.

Taken together, photograph and heap embody the scholar's lot—a curse of Tantalus, which condemns its victims to an endless desire for and an impossible pursuit of the whole past, the whole book, the whole truth. Beauty and truth are fragile. Often they survive only as fragments. At the core of this show is a hymn of praise to the slow, grinding work of those forgotten Bartleby-like creatures, the scribes and the scholars, those who first made and those who reassembled the fragments over the millennia, and by doing so preserved and illuminated the textual traditions of the human race.

"IN THE BEGINNING" TELLS TWO complex stories, and does so with a wonderful clarity, detail, and lack of condescension. The shorter one is that of the modern scholars and collectors who first assembled these materials and then worked out what they are and what they tell us about the Bible. From Charles Lang Freer, the railroad-car manufacturer who bought the Freer Gospels and other ancient manuscripts in Cairo and displayed them, in his house in Detroit, in James McNeill Whistler's Peacock room, to Constantine von Tischendorf, the German professor who persuaded the monks of Sinai to let him take away much of their magnificent fourth-century codex of the Bible, they make an extraordinary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

set of scholar-adventurers, cultural pirates whose careers seem inconceivable now—though the archaeological authorities in Italy and Greece might have a word or two to say about that.

Like the Renaissance humanists who saw monastic libraries not as ongoing institutions but as mines of forgotten treasure, these men worried little about provenance and less about the feelings of those who guarded the treasures they coveted. Like the Renaissance humanists, too, they created a revolution in scholarship. "Discovery" is sometimes a misnomer for what they managed to accomplish with money, guile, and ruthlessness—as well as a sharp eye for important and beautiful documents. Yet if they had not intervened, theft and violence would have removed some of these vital, unique monuments from the public record. Their discoveries transformed our understanding of the Bible's history, revealing for the first time the complex historical process that created and preserved it.

THE SECOND—AND CENTRAL—story is that of the Bible itself. In slow steps, laid out with exquisite care and documented with exquisite objects, we are shown that the Bible in all its forms—from the Torah, which Moses, Jews traditionally hold, wrote with his own hand, to the New Testament corpus—is the work of men. Human beings composed these books, long after the events that they described; and copied them; and translated them into language after language. Later generations selected and redacted what their predecessors had written. In the third and fourth centuries, for example, Christian scribes and scholars such as the church historian Eusebius defined the canon of the Christian Bible. They rejected as spurious books that others thought holy, some just as ancient as those they kept, or set them to the side as apocrypha. A few centuries later, the Jewish grammarians of Tiberias, the Masoretes, edited the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and equipped it with vowels and punctuation. The process of collection and correction and excision never ended. Every new Bible, every new version, eventually called for editing and commentary, and every new form of scholarship changed the object that it restored.

For a scholar visiting the Sackler, breath becomes shortest and the spine tingles most sharply not at the cases that hold manuscripts of many colors, but at those that preserve the actual handiwork of the ancient scholars. The Codex Sinaiticus was probably written in Caesarea, in the scriptorium developed by Eusebius himself. Some specialists (though not the curators of "In the Beginning") identify it as one of the fifty Bibles that Eusebius produced, in high style and at high speed, for the new churches of Constantinople, at the direct request of the emperor Constantine. Certainly it came into being in the same general period as Eusebius worked out, with incredible ingenuity, his Canon Tables—synoptic tables of passages in the four Gospels, which he divided into sections. These soon became a basic feature of the graphic presentation of the Christian Bible in every language from Armenian to Latin. "In the Beginning" brings us, in other words, back to the Creation—not of the world, but of the Christian and Jewish book.

COURTESY SMITHSONIAN

Solomon Schechter at work in Cambridge University Library, 1898

The range of scholars one meets here is extraordinary: they come from everywhere, from the Latin West to far in the East, and they include women as well as men. The Selden Acts of the Apostles bears what seems to be the scratched signature of Abbess Eadburh of Minster-in-Thanet, a correspondent of Saint Boniface and one of many holy women who copied manuscripts. Most electrifying of all is a fragment of the Aleppo codex of the Hebrew Bible. Known as *HaKeter*, or "the crown," this manuscript was copied in the tenth century in Tiberias, the citadel of Hebrew grammar, by Solomon ben Buya'a. Aaron ben Moshe ben Asher, the last member of a distinguished family, added the commentary, vowel points, and accent marks. The oldest Hebrew Bible in one volume, this may also have been the first one ever made as a single, coherent book, by a scribe and a scholar working together from start to finish.

So the oldest Tanakh we have was written and corrected by two men whose names we know. And this, in our land of ferocious biblical literalists, matters a great deal. Not long ago, as Peter Thuesen showed in his important book *In Discordance With the Scriptures*, the Protestant scholars who created the Revised Standard Version of the Bible were accused by politicians of being communists out to subvert America because they dared to translate *almah*, in Isaiah 7:14, as "young woman" rather than "virgin," the King James rendering—as if that magnificent translation somehow represented the Word of God in its perfect form, rather than a late translation of a Bible in which Christian senses were superimposed on Jewish texts.

THE BIBLE, IN SOME GENERAL sense, may well be the Word of God. That is not a scholarly question. But the materials collected in this show and in its book make clear, beyond any possibility of mistake or confusion, that no single Bible in any language represents that Word

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without error or impurity. Every Bible we have—in Armenian or Latin, Greek or Hebrew—is the flawed work of human hands. Every one of them derives from beautiful but imperfect handwritten books like those displayed here, many of which, perhaps most, omit verses and texts that a modern American would normally expect to find. Only by reading each version—sometimes, each of the many versions of a version—in context can we see what they meant to their creators.

For the Bible has gone through many revolutions. Ancient books were written on rolls, bits of which are on view here. But gradually, in the first centuries of the common era, Christians adopted a new form called the codex—essentially, that of the modern bound book, with hard covers. Jews and others emulated them. Most of the ancient books we have, including the books of the Bible, began life as a roll or rolls. And rolls were hard to preserve. Many fragments of rolls are on display here: mute evidence of their fragility. A majority of the texts have come down to us in later form, as codices, after the original rolls were copied and discarded. Scribes made mistakes, of course; and the thousands of surviving fragments of rolls do not allow us to reconstitute the texts exactly as they were before this media revolution—the most radical change in the way books were made in the Christian and Jewish worlds before printing took off in the fifteenth century.

To err, as always, was human; to make changes of many kinds was easy. Ancient texts were written continuously, without separation between words or punctuation. In the course of the first millennium of the Common Era, scribes learned to divide Hebrew and Greek and Latin words, as printers do now. But doing this required the scribe to make many hard decisions. The problem is easy to illustrate. How would you divide GODISNOWHERE? As GOD IS NOW HERE, or as GOD IS NOWHERE? Much depends on your presuppositions. And much depended on the presuppositions of those who wrote and rewrote and corrected the biblical manuscripts.

Interpretation also took place at thousands of points in every version. Every translation embodied silent decisions about meaning. It wasn't just Christian and Jewish Bibles that differed from one another. The Greek Old Testament used by Hellenistic, or Greek-speaking, Jews took a number of forms, and the most popular of these, the Septuagint, departed at many points from the Hebrew Bible as redacted by the Masoretes. Christian versions, in their many languages, also disagreed on many points, as those who made them struggled—like the modern translators and publishers whose work Daniel Radosh recently discussed in *The New Yorker*—to transport "the Bible into the world of the reader."

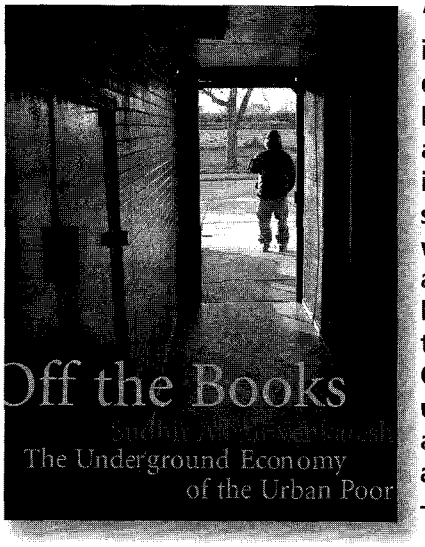
Scholars have known that the texts varied radically for a long time—at least since the Christian scholar Origen, in the third century of the Common Era, arranged six texts of the Old Testament, Hebrew and Greek, in parallel columns. And there was no end to this glacial movement, this astounding capacity of the text to slip and change. In late antiquity, great libraries, such as the one at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, held many different versions of the Bible, Greek and Latin, Arabic and Georgian and Slavonic, each with its own textual tendencies and patterns of decoration; and these sometimes flowed together in

A *Slate.com* Best Book of 2006

OFF THE BOOKS

The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor

Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh



"Remember the Chicago grad student in *Freakonomics* who figured out why drug dealers live with their mothers? His name is Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, and his new book, *Off the Books* is the riveting drug-dealer back story—and a lot more. Venkatesh, who is now a professor of sociology and African-American studies at Columbia, spent 1995 to 2003 following the money in 10 square blocks of the Chicago ghetto. He finds an intricate underground web…*The Wire* meets academia, *Off the Books* is a great and an instructive read."
—Emily Bazelon, SLATE.COM

"Venkatesh examines the underground economy of a poor Chicago neighborhood and discovers a thriving system of licit and illicit exchange."
—Benjamin Healy, ATLANTIC MONTHLY

"This extraordinary study [that] will certainly change the way we think about life and work in the underground."
—WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON

WWW.HUP.HARVARD.EDU HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unexpected ways as scribes and illuminators developed their crafts in dialogue with colleagues hundreds of miles away. And of course the commentaries that filled margins and crept into the spaces between lines, the prefatory letters by Fathers of the Church, and the illustrations suggested, and sometimes imposed, distinctive new senses on the biblical text at the center of the page. For all the efforts to fix a canon, both the words and their meanings remained amazingly labile.

The only reason to believe that a particular Christian (or Hebrew) Bible represents the Truth is that it supports beliefs drawn from other sources of conviction. To say this is not to attack religion or to say anything against the power and the glory of the Bible. On the contrary, it is to appreciate more fully how much the Bible meant to the men and women—Jewish and Christian, Eastern and Western—who first wrote its books, and their successors through the centuries, who read them and reproduced them with a care and an artistry that are foreign to our own civilization.

Manuscripts were expensive: to make a single codex of the Bible, a scribe might have to use the skins of a hundred sheep—a vast blood sacrifice to give us all that beauty, to say nothing of expensive pigments and skilled labor. Conquest and robbery, pirates and invaders, always threatened. And yet the monks and the nuns who perched on rocky Irish cliffs and rose at midnight in Syrian caves, and the Masoretes in Palestine, and many others, had the discipline and the love to give the Bible material forms of endless beauty, works of art in everything from the parchment on which they were written to the carved ivory and rock crystal of their sumptuous bindings. The sons and daughters of men have given us the Word of God, and kept it for us, in many forms, always believing that they were capturing the highest of truths as they did so. That is all the inspiration that history can reveal. But in its way it is divine. ■

Christopher Benfey
Dark Darker Darkest

THE NOTEBOOKS OF ROBERT FROST
Edited by Robert Faggen
(Harvard University Press, 792 pp., $39.95)

ROBERT FROST'S POETRY IS full of actions taken on obscure impulse. A man reins in his horse on "the darkest evening of the year" to watch the woods fill up with snow. Why does he interrupt his journey? "The woods are lovely, dark and deep." Another man hesitates where "two roads diverged in a yellow wood" and takes "the one less traveled by." These poems are so familiar that it is almost painful to quote them. Others less well known are no less driven by impulse. "Into My Own," the sonnet that opens Frost's first book of poems, evokes a distant prospect of "dark trees": "I should not be withheld but that some day/Into their vastness I should steal away." Every true poem, Frost wrote in "The Figure a Poem Makes," the lovely little manifesto that served as the preface to his *Collected Poems* of 1939, is the child of impulse: "It begins in delight, it inclines to the impulse, it assumes direction with the first line laid down, it runs a course of lucky events, and ends in a clarification of life—not necessarily a great clarification, such as sects and cults are founded on, but in a momentary stay against confusion."

In the summer of 1912, following his own impulse to "steal away," Frost abandoned a life of raising chickens and teaching school in small towns on the outskirts of Boston and took his family to England, with little money and no real prospects for making more. The Frosts had four children; two others died in infancy. Elinor, Frost's high school sweetheart turned long-suffering wife, acquiesced in this impulsive scheme, as she did in so many others; besides, she confessed to a wish to "live under thatch." At thirty-eight, Frost had enough poems to fill two books and part of a third (though no publisher), and a terrific theory of how those poems had gotten written. The poems were of two main kinds. In the first group were short lyrics of an extraordinarily high level of craftsmanship. In the second were longer poems—stories, really—that could be as harrowing ("Home Burial" or "A Servant to Servants") as a Hemingway short story, or ruminative and wry like an extended joke allowed to go off the tracks.

The theory, which looms large in *The Notebooks of Robert Frost*—seven hundred pages of wisdom and prophecy, raving and rant, expertly edited and annotated by Robert Faggen—involved what Frost called "sentence-sounds," primal patterns of intonation and impulse that, in his view, precede and underlie the words of a conversation or a good poem. Birds have their song; humans have their sentence-sounds: "So many and no more belong to the human throat, just as so many runs and quavers belong to the throat of the cat-bird, so many to the chickadee." The job of the poet was to collect them and to identify them, like an ornithologist in the outback, and then to set memorable words to the sounds.

England was good to Frost. He quickly found a publisher for the poems, and also a friend, the extraordinary writer Edward Thomas, who was as excited about the theory as he was. The shorter poems were gathered in *A Boy's Will*, the title borrowed without acknowledgment (since everyone knew its provenance anyway) from a poem called "My Lost Youth" by Longfellow, who had borrowed the phrase from Herder's translation of a Lapland lament: *Knabenwille ist Windeswille*, or "A boy's will is the wind's will." Something like Longfellow's spectacular success with the common reader was what Frost in England already had in mind for himself. As he wrote to his friend and former pupil John Bartlett in 1913, "There is a kind of success called 'of esteem' and it butters no parsnips. It means a success with the critical few who are supposed to know. But really to arrive where I can stand on my legs as a poet and nothing else I must get outside that circle to the general reader who buys books in their thousands.... I want to reach out, and would if it were a thing I could do by taking thought."

The last phrase is peculiar, and characteristic of Frost. "By taking thought"

Christopher Benfey is Mellon Professor of English at Mount Holyoke College and the author of DEGAS IN NEW ORLEANS *(Knopf) and* THE GREAT WAVE *(Random House).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sounds like it means "deliberately," but it also probably means "without sacrificing thought," hence "without dumbing down," as well. That January Frost had met Ezra Pound, "my quasi-friend," who represented the "critical few who are supposed to know." Pound told Frost that he had better adopt free verse or he would let Frost "perish by neglect." Pound liked the poems, though, and wrote an admiring review of *A Boy's Will* when it appeared in April.

The longer poems became Frost's second and greatest book of poems, *North of Boston*, a title that he took from the real estate ads in the Boston newspapers. Frost's working title had been "Farm Servants and Other People." In its array of lonely eccentrics and troubled couples, *North of Boston* bears a slight resemblance to Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, which Frost admired, and also to Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*. But a better analogy might be with such talk-heavy stories of Hemingway's as "Hills Like White Elephants" or "The Sea Change," in which a conflict between two speakers is gradually revealed in language by turns figurative and emotionally raw. The bereaved mother in "Home Burial" lashes out at her husband after he has dug the grave for their dead baby:

> "I can repeat the very words you were saying,
> 'Three foggy mornings and one rainy day
> Will rot the best birch fence a man can build.'
> Think of it, talk like that at such a time!
> What had how long it takes a birch to rot
> To do with what was in the darkened parlor."

It is not really a question, and Frost does not use a question mark. But the father stands for poetry here, for metaphorical language, while the literal-minded mother (who isn't, as Frost might say, "at home in the metaphor") refuses to take a hint.

THE BIGGEST SURPRISE IN *THE Notebooks of Robert Frost*, sixty years of private jottings in preparation for poems and prose, is the spectacular profusion of epigrams, aphorisms, and what Frost called "dark sayings." Frost once wrote, in relation to Emerson, that "I don't like obscurity and obfuscation, but I do like dark sayings I must leave the clearing of to time." He remarks in an early notebook entry that "It is best to be flattered ... when your simile passes for a folk saying from a locality." Certain phrases recur many times in these notebooks, as Frost worries them into final shape: "Great thoughts grave thoughts" or (later used as the title for a poem) "Happiness makes up in height for what it lacks in length." Another saying, repeated at least a dozen times in the course of the notebooks, consists of three stark words, "dark darker darkest"—a sort of ominous refrain for the whole.

Faggen calls Frost's notebooks—which are neither diaries nor journals but rather workbooks or outlets for thinking—"a chaotic laboratory in which many of his inventions went through constant experimentation and trial." While the notebooks "embrace a wide variety of forms," Faggen notes, "fragmentary notations and suggestively epigrammatic meditations predominate." In an undated notebook entry, for example, Frost marks his intention to "round up a lot of wise saying[s] such as I suspect we have from the Spartans such as Good fences make good neighbors." *North of Boston* opens with two men arguing about the merit of building walls to separate their property, even as they repair the stone wall that divides cows on one side from apple trees on the other. The poem begins oddly and grandiloquently, like a preacher or a blowhard politician: "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." The line from the poem that everyone knows best (it was quoted, predictably, in recent congressional debates about the merits of building a wall along the border with Mexico) is the saying "Good fences make good neighbors."

The proverb is itself a little wall of words that the speaker of the poem, in his wheedling and deliberately annoying fashion, is trying to undermine. "*Why* do they make good neighbors?" he asks, sounding the patient schoolteacher's note, while looking down on his farmer neighbor as though he were a cloddish student.

> I see him there
> Bringing a stone grasped firmly by
> the top

UNHAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Fifty Years Since Roth v. United States

The National Tragedy of the Supreme Court's Misjudgment on Obscenity

by Daniel Mark Cohen

"[God's] justice cannot sleep forever." - Thomas Jefferson

In *Unhappy Anniversary*, Daniel Mark Cohen hands down a devastating indictment of the United States Supreme Court for the immaculate failure of its obscenity jurisprudence and the consequent corruption of American children by Internet pornography. Interweaving the otherwise disparate subjects of American law, modern technology, the definition of language, the meaning of sexuality, and the writings of the Founding Fathers, Cohen endeavors to break new intellectual and legal ground through the introduction of three novel propositions: (1) that contrary to the rule of American law, but as a matter of common sense, speech is properly defined in terms of *words*, and so pictures do not constitute a form of speech (hence, pornography is not entitled to protection by the First Amendment); (2) that pornography consists of nothing more than *prostitution* mediated by still-photograph, motion-picture, and digital cameras; and (3) that the prophetic words of the Founding Fathers about collective moral agency apply with urgency to the people of the United States in the early twenty-first century. However, most of all, *Unhappy Anniversary* constitutes an impassioned statement of advocacy for a forsaken constituency in this country: more than sixty million children who have been effectively abandoned by the United States Supreme Court and the American nation as a whole.

"It is not possible that any State [should] long remain free, where Virtue is not supremely honored." -Samuel Adams

at on-line bookstores

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In each hand, like an old-stone savage
armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems
to me,
Not of woods only and the shade
of trees.
He will not go behind his father's
saying,
And he likes having thought of it
so well
He says again, "Good fences make
good neighbors."

"Mending Wall" is typical of several of Frost's finest poems in the way it builds itself on two opposing "sayings" held in momentary equilibrium: in this case the "dark" saying of the laconic farmer and the apparently more enlightened position of the undermining speaker: "Something there is that doesn't love a wall."

A SIMILAR OPPOSITION OF SAYings lies at the emotional heart of Frost's wonderful poem "The Death of the Hired Man," first published in this magazine in 1915, in which a man and wife gently debate the merits of providing shelter for an old man who was an unreliable worker in his prime and is useless now. "Warren," the wife says, "he has come home to die: / You needn't be afraid he'll leave you this time." Competing definitions of home follow. First the husband:

"Home is the place where, when you
have to go there,
They have to take you in."

And then the wife:

"I should have called it
Something you somehow haven't
to deserve."

A whole intellectual, political, and emotional terrain is covered in that simple opposition: justice versus mercy; welfare versus charity; male (in Frost's mind, at least) versus female. In the notebooks, Frost writes that the "most beautiful thing in the world is conflicting interests where both are good." Frost wanted his reader to hesitate between the two definitions of home, and not be too quick to adopt the woman's as superior. As he told an audience at Haverford College in 1937, "The thing about that, the danger, is that you shall make the man too hard. That spoils it." Not spoiling it, in Frost's view, depended on hearing the "sentence-sounds" accurately.

It sometimes seems that every American poet after Poe has had to work up a theory in the light of which his or her poems are to be read. Many of the notations in the notebooks concern the theory of poetry that Frost had formulated by the time of his English sojourn. Frost's theory about what he was up to in his poems is more consistently interesting than the self-justifications to be found in the prose writings of Pound ("make it new") or Williams ("no ideas but in things"), Marianne Moore or Wallace Stevens. "I give you a new definition of a sentence," Frost wrote to Bartlett in early 1914, parodying Jesus's new commandment. "A sentence is a sound in itself on which other sounds called words are strung. You may string words together without a sentence-sound to string them on just as you may tie clothes together by the sleeves and stretch them without a clothes line between two trees, but—it is bad for the clothes." Frost imagined that it would be possible that these sentence-sounds "could be collected in a book though I don't at present see on what system they would be catalogued." He offered some examples of such verbal gestures: "Put it there, old man! (Offering your hand)"; "I ain't a going hurt you, so you needn't be scared."

Frost was interested in the relation between language and action, in how we do things with words. We know from the notebooks that Frost thought of calling one of his Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1936 "Poetry as Performance (Feat of Words)." Though the text of those lectures is lost, we can get some sense from the notebooks of what Frost was after. We find him resisting the idea of words as mere description, existing in a separate sphere from deeds. "It is the common way to think of the sentence as saying something," he wrote. "It must do something as well." The words accompanying a handshake were one example; blessings and curses were another. "I was always in favor of the solid curse as one of the most beautiful figures," he wrote in his essay on Emerson. "We were warned against it in school for its sameness. It depends for variety on the tones of saying it and the situations." Frost's poems often turn on such "feats of words," such as the spell in "Mending Wall" or the curse and the husband's closing threat ("I'll follow and bring you back by force. I *will*!—") in "Home Burial."

Frost's theory of sentence-sounds might profitably be compared to what came to be known as "ordinary language" philosophy, first developed in the 1930s and finding its fullest expression in the work of the Oxford philosopher J. L. Austin. His *How to Do Things With Words* is concerned with precisely the kind of situations, where sentences actually do something, that interested Frost. Austin called these sentences—utterances such as marriage vows and christenings and challenges to duels—"performatives." Like Frost, Austin was impatient with the jargon of experts and sedentary theorists, preferring to do what he called "field work" in the ways people actually talked. "When we examine what we should say when, what words we should use in what situations, we are looking again not *merely* at words (or 'meanings,' whatever they may be) but also at the realities we use the words to talk about."

Ordinary language was best for the purpose, Austin claimed, since "our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connections they have found worth marking, in the lifetimes of many generations." Such formulations, in Austin's view, were likely to be "more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters, than any that you or I are likely to think up in our arm-chairs of an afternoon—the most favored alternative method." In a famous paper published in 1957, Austin proposed "excuses" as an "admirable topic" for field work, since "we can discuss at least clumsiness, or absence of mind, or inconsiderateness, even spontaneousness, without remembering what Kant thought." While Austin's theory of "speech acts" has had a significant impact on contemporary literary theory, Frost's suggestive ideas about the relation between ordinary language and sentence-sounds await their full application.

Edward Thomas was so excited by Frost's theory of sentence-sounds that he wanted to write a book about its implications for literary criticism. Frost's injunctions offered a way to preserve musicality in verse without adopting the notion that "the music of words," as in Swinburne and Tennyson, was "a matter of harmonized vowels and consonants." In the notebooks, Frost refers to the latter as "death by jingle." At Frost's instigation, Thomas, who made a living by writing literary journalism and hack

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

biographies, took up writing poetry himself, with extraordinary results. In poems such as "Rain" ("Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon") and "The Owl" and "Thaw," Thomas gave a heartbreaking and wholly original turn to Frost's ways with a flexible sentence strung across the grid of meter.

FROST HAD MANY OCCASIONS FOR grief in his life—a sister and daughter committed to insane asylums, a son who committed suicide. "Life is punishment," he wrote in a stark notebook entry. "All we can contribute to it is gracefulness in taking the punishment." But Thomas's death in France in the spring of 1917—he was killed on Easter Monday by a German shell—was a terrible blow: "I hadn't a plan for the future that didn't include him." Recently Robert Stilling, a graduate student at the University of Virginia, discovered an unpublished poem, written in Frost's hand in a friend's copy of *North of Boston*, called "War Thoughts at Home." The poem, recently published in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, begins with a deft description of blue jays fighting "On the back side of the house / Where it wears no paint to the weather," and then shifts to the wife's thoughts of her absent husband, who is in "a winter camp / Where soldiers for France are made." Glyn Maxwell, while admiring the beginning, makes a persuasive case for why the poem, with its parallel of bird rage and human war, doesn't quite come off. Since the poem "might be about the Thomases," Maxwell suggests, Frost, while "forcing ... the underbrush" in that line about the winter camp, is finally too tactful to invade the woman's private thoughts.

Frost thought his theory of sentence-sounds had implications for classroom teaching, a profession that he had abandoned not because of ineptitude but because he was so good at it, so consumed by it, that it took away from the energies he thought were better spent on poems. After his return to the United States in 1915, he was offered a job by Alexander Meiklejohn, the progressive young president of Amherst College. Thus began a long and sometimes difficult association that continued until Frost's death in 1963. He was a dazzling and irreverent teacher, and you can get a feel for what he sounded like in his brilliant set of aphorisms, first worked up in the notebooks, titled "Poetry and School." "We go to college to be given one more chance to learn to read in case we haven't learned in High School," he wrote. He did not like most of what passed for teaching at Amherst, a ritual exchange of "progressive" views on this and that. Exasperated by the results, he wrote in the notebooks that "Going to school is a game like running the gauntlet in which the object is to see if you can get through without being hurt too much by the books in the hands of the teachers." Sounding a theme in the notebooks that he often expressed elsewhere, Frost wrote: "Half our conversation is no more than voting—signifying our adherence to some well known idea in the field. What's the good of it?"

FROST'S POLITICS FOLLOWED FROM his poetics. You might say that his party affiliation was Heraclitean: "The strength of a man is in the extremity of the opposites he can hold together by force." He viewed social arrangements as a clash of opposing views held in the best of times in temporary balance—"a momentary stay against confusion." It is notoriously difficult to pin Frost down to a political position, right or left. Though the dating of the notebook entries is conjectural at best, Frost's fullest forays into political thinking seem, predictably, to come from the 1930s. Here, in his embrace of a populist individualism and his distaste for anything smacking of progress ("Leave progress to take care of itself," he wrote), he often sounds like a fellow traveler of John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren, the Southern Agrarians of the post-Depression era.

One of the revelations of Jay Parini's recent biography of Frost was how close Frost felt to this group of reactionary writers, telling Warren on once occasion that he considered himself "a Yankee Agrarian." Frost's own Harvard-educated Yankee father had been a Southern sympathizer as a teenager during the Civil War and had named his son Robert Lee Frost after his hero. But Frost, unlike the Southern Agrarians, had no residual indignation against the breakup of the Southern plantations or the so-called "Southern way of life." Small farms in New England were his vision of the good, the difficult, the hard-bitten life. He thought that industrialism and socialism were a threat to what he called "the agricultural end of our system." He worried that "abolishing the capitalist would mean abolishing the farmer included." He hated big government because he liked small farms, not because Lincoln had freed the slaves.

"Radicalism is young folly," Frost wrote in a characteristic notebook entry. "Conservatism is old stupidity." And yet conservatives were not wrong to sense that on many fronts they had an ally in Frost. "The only things I ever wished were different were the moon and goodness," he wrote: he wished the moon weren't single, but didn't specify how goodness might be altered. Frost disapproved of the way that the New Deal legislated charity, suspecting that Eleanor Roosevelt had hoodwinked her husband into such an unmanly scheme: "Mercy to the weak is handicapping the strong." He distrusted any government built around "the poor the unpretentious the ineffectual and the whipped." He had a Nietzschean distaste for the New Testament as a "poor man's book," preferring what he took to be the hard-headed wisdom of the Old Testament prophets, "who can manage to bear it that there must be good and bad losers."

Frost resisted anything that smacked of utopian thinking or utopian schemes for improving society. "Country people are never Utopian," he wrote. Over and over, we find him writing in the notebooks, in various guises, that "Civilization is the opposite of Utopia." "Utopia is a recourse of the tribe in emaciation," he proclaimed. "Civilization is an exuberance of peace and plenty. It is beautifully dangerous in its capacity for self destruction." He confessed: "I hate the poor don't you Yes and I hate the rich. I hate them both as such." He speculated in the privacy of these notebooks that maybe slavery wasn't such a bad thing, as long as race was left out of it. "The mistake of the south," he wrote, "was in not enslaving of their own race." And wasn't welfare, he asked, with its exchange of mon-

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE/PERSONAL ASSISTANT

New York City—Highly intelligent, resourceful individuals with exceptional communication skills sought to undertake research projects and administrative tasks for one of Wall Street's most successful entrepreneurs. We welcome applications from writers, musicians, artists, or others who may be pursuing other professional goals in the balance of their time. $90-110k/yr to start (depending on qualifications). Resume to: gen8R@spsfind.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ey for good behavior, a form of slavery anyway? "Let us not gag at words."

Such views, even in the sanitized form in which they entered Frost's public poems (such as "Two Tramps in Mud Time") and speeches, were abhorrent to many readers during the 1930s. Yet they derived from a view of human existence best expressed in that mantra of "dark darker darkest," which Frost glossed in a characteristic fragment (lightly edited here, with variants and excisions deleted):

> Here where we are life wells up as a strong spring perpetually piling water on water with the dancing high lights upon it. But it flows away on all sides as into a marsh of its own making. It flows away into poverty into insanity into crime. Now like all other great things poverty has its bad side and so has insanity and so has crime. The good side must not be lost sight of. Poverty inspiring ambition. Poverty has done so much good in the world I should be the last to want to see it abolished entirely. Only insanity can lift ability into genius. Crime is that smoldering defiance of law that at times bursts forth enobled into rebellion and revolution. But there is a bad side to all three poverty insanity and crime and this a dark truth and it is undeniably a dark truth.
>
> But dark as it is there is darker still. For we haven't enough to us to govern life and keep it from its worst manifestations. We haven't fingers and toes enough to tend to all the stops. Life is always breaking at too many points at once. Government is concerned to reduce the badness but it must fail to get rid of it. There is a residue of extreme sorrow that nothing can be done about and over it poetry lingers to brood with sympathy. I have heard poetry charged with having a vested interest in sorrow.
>
> Dark darker darkest.
>
> Dark as it is that there are these sorrows and darker still that we can do so little to be rid of them the darkest is still to come. The darkest is that perhaps we ought not to want to get rid of them. They be the fulfillment of exertion. What life craves most is signs of life. A cat can entertain itself only briefly with a block of wood. It can deceive itself longer with a spool or a ball. But give it a mouse for consummation. Response response. The certainty of a source outside of self—original response whether love or hate or fear.

In this extraordinary passage, one can see Frost moving toward an ethical position beyond good and evil, where a vitalist commitment to life itself comes before all other claims. His position seems almost pre-Socratic: measure in all things, a clash of opposites, ceaseless flux. Frost's pessimism can itself be vivifying. In his preface to Edwin Arlington Robinson's "King Jasper," Frost wrote memorably: "Give us immedicable woes—woes that nothing can be done for—woes flat and final."

"Original response" was a phrase Frost used in his poem "The Most of It," in which a lonely man longing for community of some kind finds an ambiguous answer in a great buck lunging into the water. In the passage just quoted, by contrast, there is an unmistakable embrace of cruelty in that line about the cat: "But give it a mouse for consummation." What exactly is the equivalent human "entertainment" envisioned here? John F. Kennedy was not wrong in enlisting Frost in the great fight against collectivism. "The separation is as important as the connection," he wrote repeatedly. "True in a poem and true in society." But on other points of a democratic (or Democratic) agenda—poverty, civil rights, peace—Frost was at best a quixotic ally; and at worst he could be callous, small-minded, paranoid, and cruel. Imagine Frost murmuring at the White House, as he does in these notebooks, that "of course poverty has its bad side just the same as war has." Of course.

Perhaps what is most striking in Frost's long-running success as traveling bard, culminating in his windswept recital of his jingoistic sonnet "The Gift Outright" at Kennedy's inauguration, is the image that he managed to maintain of the avuncular old patriot barding about. "One ordeal of Mark Twain," he wrote in the Robinson preface, "was the constant fear that his occluded seriousness would be overlooked." One task of the criticism of Frost—in the work of Richard Poirier, William H. Pritchard, Jay Parini, and others—has been to make sure that Frost's own occluded seriousness is never scanted or ignored.

In September 1946, Lionel Trilling attended one of Frost's performances at Kenyon College and was appalled by what he saw. Frost was seventy-two at the time, and had long since perfected his routine: "he makes himself the buffoon—goes into a trance of aged childishness—he is the child who is rebelling against all the serious people who are trying to organize him—take away his will and individuality." While conceding that Frost's speech was "full of brilliantly shrewd things," Trilling couldn't help cringing at "the horror of the old man—fine looking old man—having to dance and clown to escape (also for his supper)."

It was largely in recoil against an audience that could do this to Frost—"that deadly intimacy, that throwing away of dignity"—that Trilling, in his famous tribute to Frost on his eighty-fifth birthday, in 1959, took pains to distinguish what he called "my Frost" from "the Frost I seem to perceive existing in the minds of so many of his admirers." Trilling confessed that, as a man of the city, he had only recently overcome a "resistance" to Frost's country-based work. The Frost that Trilling had discovered "is not the Frost who reassures us by his affirmations of old virtues, simplicities, pieties, and ways of feeling: anything but." According to Trilling, "The universe that he conceives is a terrifying universe." Trilling challenged the audience to read "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep," which he called "the most perfect poem of our time," and "see if you are warmed by anything in it except the energy with which emptiness is perceived." He concluded: "I regard Robert Frost as a terrifying poet."

Trilling was not the first critic to suggest a darker side of Frost, but the occasion was a very public one, and Frost was visibly shaken when he tried to recite some poems after dinner. Trilling, who left the party early, wrote Frost to apologize if he had hurt his feelings. "Not distressed at all," Frost replied. "Just a little taken aback or thrown back on myself by being so closely examined so close by.... You made my birthday party a surprise party. I should like nothing better than to do a thing like that myself—to depart from the Rotarian norm in a Rotarian situation." In Trilling's performance and its aftermath, what Frost savored was not the revelation of his true dark self, but rather, as always in Frost, the clash of two sides, two sayings, in momentary equilibrium. "You weren't there to sing 'Happy Birthday, dear Robert,' and I don't mind being made controversial," he told Trilling. "No sweeter music can come to my ears than the clash of arms over my dead body when I am down." ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Simon Blackburn
No Easy Answers

PHILOSOPHY AS A HUMANISTIC DISCIPLINE
By Bernard Williams
Edited by A. W. Moore
(Princeton University Press, 227 pp., $35)

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE DEED: REALISM AND MORALISM IN POLITICAL ARGUMENT
By Bernard Williams
Edited by Geoffrey Hawthorn
(Princeton University Press, 174 pp., $29.95)

THE SENSE OF THE PAST: ESSAYS IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY
By Bernard Williams
Edited by Myles Burnyeat
(Princeton University Press, 393 pp., $39.50)

ON OPERA
By Bernard Williams
(Yale University Press, 192 pp., $30)

When Bernard Williams died, in 2003, the loss was felt well beyond the refined world of academic philosophy. In a succession of obituaries and affectionate memorial events at Cambridge, Oxford, and Berkeley, distinguished contemporaries from many fields testified to the inspiration he had given them. All spoke of his terrifying brilliance, his dazzling speed of mind and extraordinary range of understanding, his zest and his glittering wit. Some touched on a puzzle that he left, for he displayed a paradoxical combination of exhilaration and pessimism, of complete facility in the academic exercises of philosophy juxtaposed with an almost tragic sense of the resistance that the human clay offers to theory and analysis, let alone to recipes and panaceas. This complexity made him a unique, and uniquely admired, figure in his generation.

Since Williams's death, his widow, Patricia Williams, and different friends and admirers have collected and edited those of his essays that had not previously been conveniently available. These four books are the very important result. They reveal a thinker deeply immersed in the historical contingencies of human life, deeply impressed by its variations and plasticities, impatient of universal formulae for living, contemptuous of any kind of triumphalism and complacency—and at the same time an egalitarian, a liberal, a democrat, and in important ways a believer in Enlightenment values, if not a believer in the underpinnings that some Enlightenment figures believed they could offer for those values. They also reveal just how challenging, and how enjoyable, really imaginative philosophy can be.

Bernard Williams was a moral philosopher, but his work covered much more than this term usually implies. His earliest papers included a good number on metaphysics, while an ongoing preoccupation with skepticism and philosophical method produced work on Wittgenstein and was crowned by a book on Descartes. A principal thesis of that book is revisited in one of the finest essays of his later years, and the one that is nearest to being a summary of his aims and methods, "Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline," reprinted in the collection bearing its title. Williams defends the ability of science to put us on the road toward an "absolute" conception of the world "which is to the largest possible extent independent of the local perspectives or idiosyncrasies of inquirers." This may sound bland enough, and such a view is probably implicitly held by most scientists; but for a long time the climate in philosophy, history, and the sociology of science has tended to emphasize constructivism over realism, and to celebrate the thickness of the spectacles, or paradigms, through which the scientist peers at nature. Williams, by contrast, commented dismissively on the "remarkable assumption that the sociology of knowledge is in a better position to deliver truths about science than science is to deliver truths about the world."

By opposing that picture, Williams raised controversy, although as the essay shows, he was particularly irritated by the travesty occasionally foisted on him that we could have a description of the world without deploying our own language or employing our own concepts. This was never the idea. What Williams believed was that science had a title to knowledge that did not depend on the history, culture, values, or interests of those engaged in it, and in this way it was distinguished from other inquiries, including philosophy itself. He thought that this difference showed, for instance, in the different relation that science bears to its own history. The scientist can get by with a very slight knowledge of the history of discovery. But the philosopher cannot do the same, because our present ways of thinking and acting are only intelligible as historical formations. They are not the unchanging or universal products of uniform human reason facing eternal problems. The subject matter of the humanities is the nature of human life and thought, and that subject matter is necessarily only approachable by us from our own human point of view, albeit a standpoint infused with enough of the same culture, values, and interests as those of the agents whom we interpret for understanding to be possible.

The difference between science and the humanities is visible, Williams argued, in the way the history of science can be presented as a history of arguments that were actually won by one side or another. Whereas a human change, such as the displacement of the ancien régime by modernity, is not a history of arguments won, but a history in which one set of ideas has simply displaced another: the defenders of old ways are not refuted, but just die out. Science can write a "vindicatory genealogy" of its history, couched in terms of progress toward the truth. Humanity cannot write its own history this way; or if it does so it will, by imposing the perspective of the present, simply be adding another dismal chapter to the story of human complacency. This way of thinking, Williams argued, changed our political relationships. Opponents in a debate about equality, or about liberty, should be seen not as simply wrong or mistaken, but as standing either where the future

Simon Blackburn is professor of philosophy at the University of Cambridge and the author of TRUTH: A GUIDE *(Oxford University Press).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

may take everyone or forlornly on a set of values that history may be about to trample underfoot. This may make Williams sound like a "postmodernist" or "relativist" of a fairly familiar stamp, but not so. He worked scrupulously to avoid any such crudities and polarizations, preserving some conception of knowledge, even in ethics, albeit knowledge with a human face.

One of Williams's constant themes was the tension between the historical mutability of human self-consciousness and the need for us to find ourselves in others if we are to understand them. We cannot write the history or understand the thoughts of beings wholly alien, but we have to work in the consciousness that the agents in our past were not simply displaced clones of ourselves. Genuine pluralism ought not to imply that understanding is impossible, but it constantly threatens to do so. In his political essays, and in his work on Wittgenstein, Williams often lets the issue revolve around who the "we" are as we oscillate between an abstract, universal aspiration (Kant, or Rawls, or liberalism in its more imperialistic guises) and a more rooted "communitarian" reality (Hegel, reincarnated in our time by Charles Taylor and Alasdair Macintyre). Williams cheerfully admitted that in this debate "my contribution has been to some extent that of making myself a nuisance to all parties."

He constantly voiced mistrust of the universal aspirations of liberalism, standing as they often do on the illusion of a bedrock in human reason and knowledge, while other moral and political ideologies are supposedly founded on sand. For Williams, it is sand everywhere, and sand all the way down. "In the Beginning Was the Deed," again the title of an essay in the collection of the same name, is taken from one of Goethe's sayings, and held for Williams the moral that it is only by action, not by thought, that we make ourselves into beings responsive to some particular profile of reasons, or possessed of particular sources of shame and guilt, pride and desire, and therefore capable of ethics and politics at all. Williams's human agents are not the rational, self-governing, ahistorical nuggets of freedom found in Kant, but "opaque aggregation[s] of many actions and forces."

Yet just as one is about to write him down as a fellow traveler of postmodernism and relativism, he skips free, for he is equally cautious about overemphasizing differences. When Williams turned to the classical world, particularly in what is probably his deepest and finest book, *Shame and Necessity*, it was to take issue with scholars who had magnified the difference between us and the Greeks to the point of making them incomprehensible. Williams easily rebutted such pessimism, and his Homeric agents turned out to be quite like ourselves after all, or ourselves as we might have been without so much Christianity, history, and knowledge in our baggage.

ALTHOUGH THE HISTORICAL turn came to dominate more of Williams's later work, it is as a moral philosopher that he wrote his most influential books and essays. He was an uncompromising critic of two of the major movements that often dominate the subject, utilitarianism and Kantianism. As the doctrine that actions are to be judged solely by their consequences for human good or ill, however that may be measured, utilitarianism has always had critics, and all philosophy students are brought up to puzzle over whether it could be right to hang an innocent man if, through some concatenation of surprising circumstances, more good can be gained or more harm averted by doing so. (Guantánamo will do nicely as an example.) Williams transformed the standard discussion by moving the issue to the nature of motivation, the nature of agency, and the nature of the good for human beings. By analyzing examples where an agent could maximize goods or minimize harms, but only at the cost of performing actions that go deeply against the grain, he argued that we cannot coherently regard ourselves simply as conduits to greater general utility. What we do is more than what we produce. An agent's integrity is bound up with local spheres of responsibility, and it is the meaning of the actions performed inside those spheres that give us our identities.

By trying to turn us into "servants of the world," Williams maintained, utilitarianism in fact destroys the very networks of care and responsibility that are required for life to have meaning at all. His point was not that utilitarianism necessarily gave the wrong answers in difficult cases, but the much more subtle one that it goes about getting its answers in the wrong way. His examples and his analysis dominated all subsequent work in this area, and were largely responsible for a general awareness of the complex clusters of values that actually determine our decision-making. He was well aware that sophisticated utilitarians, such as Sidgwick and possibly even Mill, advocated various indirect forms of the doctrine. They measured the motivations in a moral consciousness by their impact on utility, but admitted that by this measure the utilitarian consciousness itself might not come out as the best. Williams thought that this complexity produced an unacceptable dislocation or fracture in the theory, or in the psychology of any agent who embodied the theory. He mocked it as what he called "Government House Utilitarianism," whereby a higher part of us controls the doings of lower parts for purposes that it is important to conceal from them.

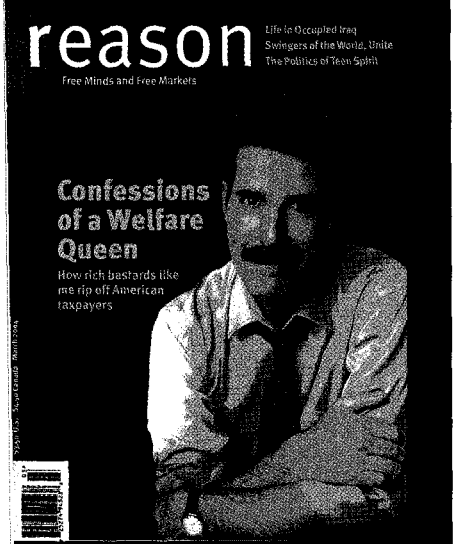
Williams's opposition to Kantianism in ethics was also founded on a deep mistrust of the nature of agency as it is construed by Kantians. One issue was the Kantian emphasis on acting from the sense of duty—giving rise, as Williams put it with his usual genius for the memorable phrase, to the problem of "one thought too many." If you kiss your wife, or for that matter save her from a shipwreck, because it is your duty, then things have gone wrong: you are supposed to act spontaneously, out of affection, and if you drag duty into it you have one thought too many. The other issue that Williams highlighted is one of what he equally felicitously called "moral luck." Kant, he believed, had sought to put right action beyond the sphere of happenstance and contingency. According to Kant, whether you do right or wrong is entirely voluntary, totally within the control of your will. It does not matter what your natural and cultural inheritance might be, nor your emotional nature, nor your circumstances, nor the consequences that actually come about because of your action. This fantasy of pure freedom is part of what Williams called "the morality system," a system of thinking about guilt and responsibility that still dominates many of our attitudes. Williams argues, like Hume, that motivation cannot come from reason alone, and that the motivational forces to which agents are subject are never entirely within their control.

He went on to undermine the morality system by concentrating upon the moral emotions of shame and remorse, and the many ways in which luck determines whether someone gets into situations in which those emotions are appropriate. Two people might behave in exactly the same careless way, and one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"My definition of a free society is a society where it is safe to be unpopular."

— Adlai Stevenson


reason
Free Minds and Free Markets
Life in Occupied Iraq
Swingers of the World, Unite
The Politics of Teen Spirit
Confessions of a Welfare Queen
How rich bastards like me rip off American taxpayers

At reason We Stand Up for Freedom

At **reason** magazine we've been battling on behalf of the Bill of Rights and individual liberty for 37 years. And today we're shouting from the editorial mountaintop fighting the newest attempts to power-grab your rights . . . New surveillance technology . . . The PATRIOT Act . . . Zoning thuggery . . . Airport searches . . . Religious discrimination . . . Or any of the dozens of other raids on your rights that are going on right now.

Every month we make sure you know all about the latest schemes that the powers-that-be would like you to fall for . . . And supply a healthy dose of common sense along the way!

You'll find that **reason** is refreshingly unconventional . . . Often unpredictable . . . And always a fun read! And you can sense our all-out commitment to freedom on every page.

reason can't be pigeonholed with easy labels like "Left" or "Right," "Liberal or Conservative." That's why our readership goes way beyond the "gang of usual suspects" that congregates around more predictable magazines.

We believe you'll agree that **reason** is the magazine for you. Check us out today . . . **We've made it as easy for you as we possibly can!**

We'll give you a FREE ISSUE to decide for yourself!
Just Send in your Free Issue Trial Voucher Today

Celebrate Liberty . . . Subscribe to reason!

Free Issue Trial Voucher

end No Money!

ler you review your Free Issue . . .
'll send you an invoice for the
ıainder of your 1-year
scription (10 additional issues) for
.97 – a **Savings of 48% off Our**
ver Price! If you decide **reason**
t for you, just write "cancel" on
invoice, and you'll owe nothing.
Free Issue will be yours to keep,
questions asked!

you've got nothing to lose . . .
d a full year of sticking it to
busybodies to gain!

— Special FREE ISSUE Offer! —

❑ **Yes!** I want a magazine that **Celebrates Liberty**. Send me my **FREE ISSUE** of **reason**. And continue the remainder of my 1-year subscription for only $19.97. I'll write "cancel" on my invoice, return it postage-paid – and owe nothing – if I'm not delighted.

Name: _____
Please Print

Address: _____ Apt. _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

A7TNR1

Mail Your **Free Issue Trial Voucher** Today to: **reason** Subscription Dept., PO Box 526, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-7867
OR Call 1-888-732-7668 Toll Free (Be Sure to Mention the **FREE ISSUE OFFER**) OR Visit www.reason.com/FreeIssue

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of them may get away with it and walk away blithely enough, whereas the other, because of bad luck, meets catastrophe, and remorse and shame may dog his footsteps. The morality system, Williams insisted, can make no sense of this difference, since by its reckoning each of these individuals equally did what was right or what was wrong. Yet the emotional difference cannot be ignored: life would be unrecognizable without it. So the moral emotions, properly understood, suggest that human life is, and ought to be, conducted in terms of a much more pluralistic and heterogeneous set of values, which Williams preferred to dub "ethics" rather than "morals." This became known as the "Gauguin problem" after the salient example that Williams gave of the painter's rotten behavior vindicated by unforeseeable success. In the eyes of many, Williams's discussion of luck attacked the Kantian picture just as effectively and influentially as he had attacked utilitarianism.

Williams thought that Kant offered an illusion or consolation of another kind: the realist or objectivist fantasy of a moral system that will trump politics, an "argument that will stop them in their tracks when they come to take you away." Like some of the opponents of Socrates, Williams had a keen eye for the moment when politics takes over from moral principle. He spoke of the limits of philosophy, but the limits often seemed more like obstacles to the coherence of ethical thought itself, rather than limits to our philosophical understanding of what ethics is supposed to be. Thus, as legacies of the Enlightenment, both Kantianism and utilitarianism purport to provide a standpoint from which moral criticism can be made, to which in some sense the reasonable agent must listen or ought to listen. Yet this philosophical project of finding some deep bedrock on which our own ordering of thought and conduct stands secure struck him as essentially farcical. He gloriously summed up one example of this rationalism in ethics, Robert Nozick's libertarian theory of rights, simply as "a device for switching off the monitors to earth." Not for Williams "the tireless aim of moral philosophy to make the world safe for well-disposed people."

Still, it has proved harder to know what positive system Williams intended to put in place. An agent's "projects" or deepest attachments, or even his integrity as an agent, can evidently depend on something falling short of a common point of view with other people. It seemed as if they might issue in highly local and restricted concerns and loyalties—in other words, a politics of identity. And then it remained unclear what resources Williams would have left for exerting pressure toward more universal or more liberal values. It sounded as though he might be joining with "communitarian" opponents of the Enlightenment, allowing people their traditional prejudices and tribal partialities, but also offering them a clear conscience. Yet this was not the direction in which he traveled: his pessimism about theory did not go along with any dewy-eyed Tolstoyan or Wittgensteinian celebration of the wisdom of the everyday.

Williams may have been an egalitarian and a social democrat, but he was unsentimentally aware of the "emptiness and cruel superficiality of everyday thought." Communitarianism, or a happy confidence in the wisdom of traditional folkways, was hardly likely to appeal to someone who had complacency as a principal target. In fact, much of Williams's work is concerned exactly with the interplay between the universal and the particular, or the challenge that equality, liberty, justice, and the common point of view pose to the rooted and potentially blinkered perspectives of our everyday priorities and concerns. By refusing to countenance easy or self-deceptive solutions to this conflict, he was acknowledging its depth rather than turning his back on its importance. In his final book, Williams talked of the "intellectual irreversibility of the Enlightenment" and described any moral or political forces that might undo it as potentially catastrophic.

PHILOSOPHERS TRAVELING IN roughly Williams's direction often fall into the arms of Aristotle; but not him. Williams's profound sense of the varieties of human existence prevented him from subscribing to any glib or settled view of a single human nature and a single proper expression of it. Aristotelians try to derive what it is to be a good human being simply from what it is to be a human being, just as once we know what a knife is, we know what a good knife is. But Williams was not likely to be seduced into equating behaving well, even in ethically minimal ways, with flourishing "by the ecological standard of the bright eye and the bushy coat." Hearing a colleague comparing being a good action to being a good knife, Williams once dryly remarked that if a knife was bad enough it stopped being a knife altogether, whereas when someone does something really bad, they still do something. It is simplistic, he insisted, to think that our human nature, all by itself, contains a template for living as we should.

For the Aristotelian, a human being with his or her nature fully expressed is necessarily a good human being. But Williams was too realistic to ignore what he insisted was the sinister downside of the injunction to "be a man." He characteristically placed Aristotle in his disturbed historical situation in Athens in the fourth century B.C.E., and regarded him as a "provincial who became exceedingly impressed by a conservative view of a certain kind." He described the vision of each thing striving after its own perfection, or as he called it, his "pretty self-satisfied account of the virtues," simply as "an astonishing piece of cultural wish-fulfillment." Yet *The Sense of the Past* contains at least four sensitive and engaged essays on Aristotle. When Williams mocked someone, it was usually after a deeper engagement than most admirers manage.

Whereas some of his stress on emotion in human affairs affiliated Williams to Hume, he could never accept a Humean account of our ethics as simply an expression of our passions or atti-

Whale

In one version of events
Jonah was swallowed
by the whale
nightly and each morning
he recounted his story.

Jonah was shut
in a windowless room and instructed
to draw his whale.

The instructor was kind.
This was no age of monsters.

In one version of events
Jonah put thumbtacks
in his eyes
and sounded the room's
shadowy circumference.

MIKE WHITE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tudes, given by nature and molded by culture. He had a strong antipathy to the whole issue of whether with ethics we are in the domain of the representation of moral fact or in the domain of attitude and prescription. He held that issue responsible for what he somewhat unfairly regarded as the arid and boring substitute for real ethics that dominated the Oxford of his upbringing. His only interest was in the practical and political expression of the issue—for instance, in the reasons we may have for diminishing our bigotries or expanding our tolerations.

In many of his writings he instead explored the centrality of "thick concepts" in practical reasonings. A thick concept is used when we describe someone as modest, or just, or courageous, in which there are both elements of description and elements of evaluation. Fact and value are seamlessly entangled, and this entangling gives us a way of crossing, or perhaps ignoring, the distinction between fact and value that preoccupies so much ethical theory. Williams did not see this entangling as a way of evading the perspectival nature of ethical thought; we must not jump to the other extreme, and suppose that with ethical concepts we describe "what is there, anyway," or give an absolutely true description of things such as science may aspire to deliver. The task is to reconcile the perspectival element with a satisfying account of the claim of ethics to be a subject about which knowledge is possible. In a revealing interview shortly before he died, Williams said that most of his efforts had been concentrated upon making "some sense of the ethical as opposed to throwing out the whole thing because you can't have an idealized version of it."

A similar perspectival and pluralistic attitude informed Williams's discussion of yet another topic that he made his own: the nature of tragedy and tragic dilemmas, as when Agamemnon must either betray his army or sacrifice his daughter. Williams again gave a central place to notions like remorse and shame. But he also suggested that these examples set a limit to the goal of consistency in ethics. Whereas consistency is the first virtue of a theory that purports to describe how things stand, in response to tragic dilemmas the inconsistency of thinking that you must do something and that you cannot do it seems far from being a vice. Indeed, it seems to be a virtue, since not to think both things would seem to be crass and insensitive. Here, too, we have a contrast between an ethical response to the world and a description of its fabric. When we face two contradictory descriptions of "what is there, anyway," we resolve the problem by settling for one, and the other disappears without trace. But in a tragic dilemma, even if we decide we must pursue one course of action, the other does not disappear, and a vivid sense remains that we have failed, and an obligation remains to haunt us.

ANYONE WITH AN ACUTE SENsitivity to the actual contours of human emotion and action must be drawn to their treatment in drama, literature, and music. It is appropriate that Williams's favorite art form combined all three. He could write marvelously about opera, and the volume of his short writings, often on Verdi, Mozart, Puccini, and above all Wagner, is a mine of insight. Consider this, on the sextet at the end of *Don Giovanni*, signaling some kind of return to normal life:

> That end, however, and still more the essential closing bars of the opera that follow it, both affirm that there is no actual human life that could be lived as unconditionally as his. Those who survive Giovanni—not only the other characters, but, on each occasion that we have seen the opera, ourselves—are both more and less than he is: more, since the conditions *on* humanity, which we accept, are also the conditions *of* humanity; and less, since one thing vitality needs is to sustain the dream of being as free from conditions as he is.

I suspect that Williams envied the artist because, unlike the philosopher, he need not torment himself with the question of what his activity amounted to, or what would count as succeeding in it. One of his favorite composers was Verdi, and he agreed with Isaiah Berlin about the "naïveté" of Verdi, his unself-conscious immersion in the unfolding drama and music, which is at the same time a sign of Verdi's endless vitality. And the result of acquaintance with opera, even tragic opera, is life-enhancing, renewing, rejuvenating, whereas the result of immersion in philosophy is too often impatience and melancholy.

The question that Williams broached in the last book he published, *Truth and Truthfulness*, was the Nietzschean one of whether our commitment to truthfulness leads to tragedy, or whether it is possible for history to be both truthful and hopeful. Williams does not close the question, but his sympathy lay with the view he represented as also that of Nietzsche, that "there are very compelling true accounts of the world that could lead anyone to despair who did not hate humanity." Significantly, the book ended with the passage from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in which the narrator admits that Kurtz was a remarkable man, and describes his despairing last words ("The horror! The horror!") as the appalling face of a glimpsed truth.

So there was undeniably a deep pessimism at the heart of much of Williams's writing, and possibly even a nihilism beneath some of his very funny but frequently destructive remarks about almost everybody else. (Of a showy colleague: "If you look carefully under the artificial tinsel, you will get a glimpse of the real tinsel.") But he never came across as bitter, perhaps because he was always too clear-sighted to have had large-scale hopes whose betrayal by time would engender that vice. Still, his outlook was closer to that of his favorite Greek tragedians, or to the stark historian Thucydides, than to anything more reconciled to the world. For him, as for Sophocles or Conrad, the order of what we call reason is a fragile and perishable veneer, barely covering for a time the kaleidoscope of divergent lights and darknesses, triumphs and horrors, that is the human condition.

Williams offered no handbook for living and no consolation, but he was far from resigned. His reaction, like that of a true Verdian, was to seize life, horrors and all, with an energy that was the opposite of fatalism. We may live under the great indifferent thoughtlessness of the gods—but then the right response is to live. This energy, constantly expressed in his intense intellectual curiosity, goes some way to resolving the paradox that, in spite of the tragic sense of life, he was the most exhilarating of writers and companions. It is good that even those who could not enjoy his scintillating company can now savor these demonstrations of his extraordinary abilities. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW YORK DIARIST

Survivor: Baghdad

Shortly after Saddam Hussein's ouster in 2003, I visited Emad Levy and his father, Ezra, at their starkly furnished home in Baghdad. Emad was the city's last rabbi, and he and his father were two of its only remaining Jews. I wasn't the only Westerner who stopped by their house in those heady days immediately following the end of Saddam's rule. Harold Rhode, a Pentagon official, had visited recently along with Tamara Chalabi, daughter of Iraqi National Congress chief Ahmad. So had a *Daily Telegraph* reporter from London. Everyone had their reasons for stopping in. For me, the meeting was an opportunity to connect with my roots. My mother was born in Baghdad, less than a mile from the Levy home. Here, I could listen to my family's dialect of Judeo-Arabic—it is even rarer than Yiddish, alas, and growing rarer every day—spoken in its historic headquarters by the final holdouts from a once-proud Jewish community, reduced in the span of just a few decades from 140,000 to virtually nothing.

Last October, Emad was the subject of an article in *The Washington Post* because he had finally decided to leave Iraq. "I have no future here," he explained. "I must go out to have a life for myself." If you didn't know Emad, you might have gotten the impression from the story that he was an ultra-religious symbol of continuity with Jewish Babylonian history. In fact, Emad's relationship to Judaism is a bit more complicated than the *Post* let on. His father grew up in an Iraq where Judaism was still strong. He lived among massive numbers of Jews well into his adulthood—as late as 1941, Jews still made up a plurality of Baghdad's population—and, though almost all of those Jews had emigrated by 2003, Ezra still connected viscerally with the eclectic culture they left behind. He could recite from memory an old poem by Hayyim Nahman Bialik, penned in a Lithuanian yeshiva and taught to legions of Jews throughout the diaspora during the early twentieth century. It's a Jewish exile's ode to a bird he hopes has brought a message from his "brothers in Zion, both distant and near." And so, when the time finally came for Ezra to leave, he acted quickly: Shortly after I met him in Baghdad, he decamped to Jerusalem for good.

Emad was different. His father had grown up in a time when it was still possible to live an openly Jewish life in Iraq, but Emad did not have that luxury: He needed to fit in. One of his friends told me that, when they hung out as kids during the 1980s, Emad spoke perfect Muslim dialect and watched "naughty German movies" on a bulky new VCR. I was a wild kid back then, Emad told me—hardly religious. It was only later in life that Emad became devout. He was, in fact, a *Baal Teshuvah*—a born-again Jew. He discovered his connection to Judaism on his own terms, teaching himself to read some Hebrew while conjuring a Jewish world he had barely known—and learning to live in it, nearly alone.

The *Post*'s interest in Emad comes as no surprise: Arab Jewry's scant remnants always make for compelling human interest stories—a media curiosity. For decades, Arab dictators would put their Jews on display for foreign writers, requiring them to provide scripted testimonials to the regime's supposed tolerance toward minorities. Meanwhile, some Israeli journalists would sneak into Arab countries and come back with tales of wealthy Arab Jews—materially comfortable but politically oppressed—in golden handcuffs or not-so-wealthy Jews in ordinary handcuffs. The latter stories were, of course, more accurate—but also more damaging to their subjects. "We got spooked by the publicity," Bahraini Jewish leader Ibrahim Nunu told me recently, recalling an Israeli journalist's surreptitious foray into the country in the 1970s. "Some of the remaining Jews here have avoided reporters ever since." More recently, glib coverage of Iraqi Jewish issues appears to have unwittingly provided fodder for Islamist militants. Three years ago, *The Wall Street Journal* ran a front-page profile of eccentric millionaire Naim Dangoor, who had appointed himself "exilarch" of Iraq's Jewish community from his home in London. Though few Iraqi Jews actually recognized him as their leader, his claim on their behalf to $20 billion in Iraqi assets was deemed newsworthy by the *Journal* as well as *The Guardian*. On the trip where I met Emad in 2003, I read alarmist coverage in the local press of an Iraqi Jewish plot to snatch back real estate under Dangoor's leadership and a fatwa prescribing death to any Iraqi who sold his land to a Jew.

At this point, Iraqis probably don't have to worry about Jews buying up land. In Emad's case, the reverse is happening: He is currently trying to sell his house so he can leave Baghdad for good. I called the family recently for an update. His brother Salih, who lives in Holland, gave me Emad's new Baghdad cell phone number and asked me to relay a message: "Tell Emad to get out as soon as he can. If the house won't sell, forget the house!" But Emad, who picked up his phone after sundown in Baghdad on a recent Saturday night, told me that his departure would take time. "You may question why I don't just leave, even now," he said. "But the house is more than just its value in money. It's my blood. I've spent my life defending the place. To leave and start again somewhere else with nothing would break my spirit." During a later conversation, I asked Emad whether it was harder to find a buyer for the house because he is Jewish. "What do you think?" he replied. "It makes it harder to do everything. I can't easily leave the house, let alone sell it." So not only are Jews discouraged from buying property in Iraq, it turns out they can't get rid of it, either. Emad's fellow Iraqis are making it both impossible for him to stay and impossible for him to leave.

His dilemma brings to mind Amos Oz's observation that Europeans long wanted Jews out of Europe—until they finally left, at which point Europeans wanted them out of Palestine, too. The implication for Jews, Oz said, was "don't be here and don't be there. That is, don't be." Under circumstances like these, to be Jewish takes a lot of gumption and even a little blind faith. Maybe Emad Levy found religion just in time.

JOSEPH BRAUDE

Joseph Braude is the author of The New Iraq: Rebuilding the Country for Its People, the Middle East, and the World.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Some ideas are more durable than others.

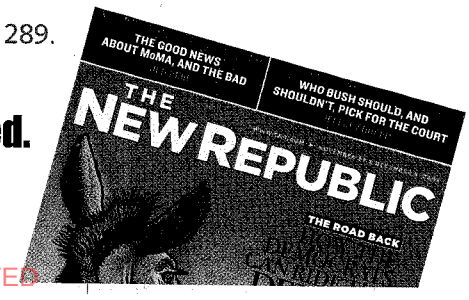
For 90 years and counting, **The New Republic** has tirelessly championed clear thinking.

While ruthlessly avoiding the herd.

Get insight into the ideas that last.

Subscribe today at **tnr.com/subscribe** or call 800.827.1289.

Where opinions get started.



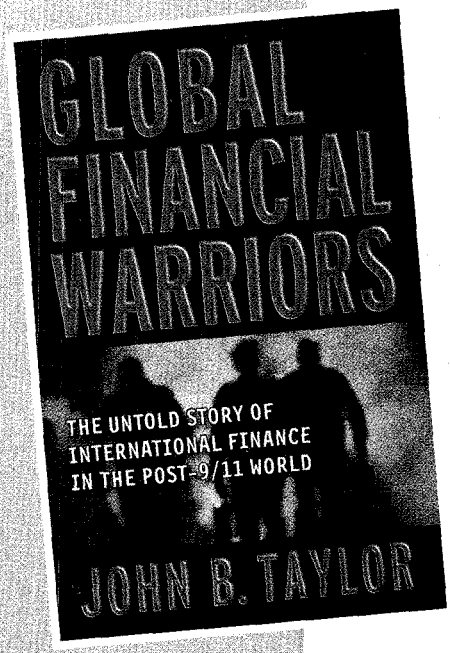
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A New Book by John Taylor of the Hoover Institution

Global Financial Warriors

The Untold Story of International Finance in the Post-9/11 World

JOHN B. TAYLOR



"No one is better equipped to tell the story of international finance after 9/11 than John Taylor, who for four years prosecuted the financial aspects of the war on terror with unwavering intensity. Global Financial Warriors *is an exceedingly well-written, often gripping look at how politics, national security, and global finance overlap and intersect. There is no better way to understand the enormous progress made in these areas than to read this book."*

—Alan Greenspan

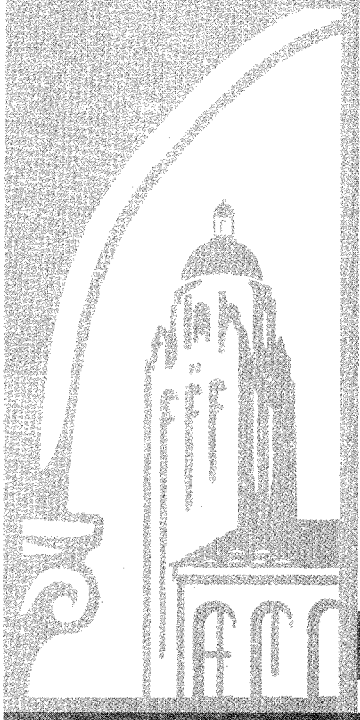
"To the jobs of waging economic warfare against terrorism, even while battling global financial contagion and championing major reforms at the IMF and the World Bank, John Taylor brought the assets of an innovative economist and a clear-eyed leader. To the telling of his story, he brings the skills of an unusually gifted teacher and an exceptionally artful writer. Global Financial Warriors *is a must read—and a compelling, fascinating read it is—for anyone who would understand the complexities and the challenges of the global economy in the era after 9/11."*

—David M. Kennedy

John B. Taylor *was Treasury Under Secretary for international affairs from 2001 to 2005. A senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, he is also the Mary and Robert Raymond Professor of Economics at Stanford.*

Jannuary 2007, 352 pages,
ISBN: 978-0-393-06448-3 $26.95 hardcover

Available wherever books are sold.



Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

HOOVER INSTITUTION

. . . ideas defining a free society

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, Stanford California 94305-6010 Toll-free: 877.466.8374 Fax: 650.723.1687 info@hoover.stanford.edu www.hoover.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED